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THE HETEROGENEITY OF ASIAN AMERICANS' RACIAL EXPERIENCES:

HOW RELEVANT IS HELMS'S

PEOPLE OF COLOR RACIAL IDENTITY ATTITUDES SCALE?

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by

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THE HETEROGENEITY OF ASIAN AMERICANS' RACIAL EXPERIENCES:

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This study tested the construct validity of the People of Color Racal Identity Attitudes Scale (PCRIAS) for Asian Americans using a mixed methods inquiry. The study produced mixed results with regard to the construct validity of the PCRIAS; Conformity and Immersion-Emersion statuses were somewhat corroborated by the qualitative data and provide tentative construct validity for these statuses of Helms's model. Though statistically insignificant, results for the Internalization status, purportedly the most mature and developed of all racial identity statuses, were opposite to what racial identity theory would predict. Although some dimensions of the PCRIAS may be meaningful for Asian Americans, findings cast doubt upon the overall applicability of PCRIAS scale for Asian Americans.

Results draw attention to the importance of race-specific experiences for Asian Americans and highlight the within-group heterogeneity of Asian Americans' racial experiences. Qualitative analysis yielded critical theoretical points that illuminate how the historical, political, and economic context of Asian Americans has led to a multitude

of options for the management of racial stimuli. Emergent themes revealed that Asian Americans have discursive options—factors such as the model minority myth and recourse to ethnic identity—that may offer possible detours around the recognition of racism or the incorporation of race into their sense of identity. These detours, however, may not necessarily be experienced as maladaptive or ego-dystonic. Nonetheless, one of the most prevalent emergent themes involved an endorsement of subjective distress caused by some racial experience, highlighting the clinical significance of Asian Americans' racial identity and their management of racial stimuli. Emergent themes also revealed that the salience of race is externally imposed upon Asian Americans through the experiences of being (mis)recognized as a racial other. Limitations of the current study are discussed and suggestions for future research are explored.

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Chapter I: Introduction

> "I'm not sure if you've guessed or not, but I'm not White, I'm really Mexican, but I don't identify with them…Mexicans are dirty, lazy and stupid, and I'm not…It's weird to tell you this...I don't ever talk about it."

After six months of weekly psychotherapy sessions, a client spontaneously offered this disclosure to me while discussing his dating experiences. Aside from indicating "White-German/Italian" on his intake paperwork, he had never mentioned race—neither his nor mine. He originally sought treatment in order to address a long-standing pattern of compulsive self-destructive behaviors. How might we decipher the complicated relationship between this "racial disclosure" and his overall psychological functioning? Did his self-destructive behaviors stem from some sort of internalized racism and self-hate? Or are these perhaps two entirely different issues?

In contemporary U.S. society, race carries profound meaning. We remain a country obsessed with the problem of racial division and its multiple realities while we are often paralyzed in our attempts to respond effectively. From anti-immigration legislation and affirmative action policy to interracial dating and racial stereotypes in pop culture, open discussion about race can arouse powerful affects and key human concerns, among them, the problem of difference, wishes for recognition, and desires for domination and control (Holmes, 1992). It must be recognized that these broad social and political impasses around racial dialogue extend into the therapeutic encounter. Yet, it remains that psychotherapists have few models to assist them in understanding these interpersonal and intrapsychic dynamics.

This dissertation investigated the psychological processes whereby race—generally agreed to be a socio-political construction (Omi & Winant, 1994) stemming

from histories of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism—becomes manifested in the identities and psyches of Asian Americans in contemporary U.S. society. This is a particularly apt question given the increasingly diverse racial demographics of the U.S. and the persisting prevalence of racial inequality. The immensely complex social and political dynamics of race and racism are matched by equally complex psychological dynamics.

Psychologists have made notable attempts to address these issues through research and theory on racial identity development (Helms, 1990). Racial identity theory has advocated a focus on the psychological processes that facilitate how individuals interpret and respond to racist phenomenon (Helms, 1986; Helms & Cook, 1999). Research applications have been undergirded by a "diagnostic" imperative to locate individuals on a spectrum of pathology to health. In addition, most analyses of racial dynamics are dominated by a Black/White binary model of race relations (Alcoff, 2003; Alvarez & Kimura, 2001). As a result, Latinos, Asian Americans, Arab Americans and Native Americans have been largely neglected in psychological research on race and racial identity. The current models of racial identity development are unsupported by research that specifically investigates these neglected populations.

The psychological effects of racism and the relevance of racial identity for Asian Americans remain poorly understood. This dissertation attempted to augment the extant research literature through a mixed methods study. In recognition of the widespread research applications of Janet Helms's theory and model of racial identity, this study investigated the generalizability of this model, the People of Color Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (PCRIAS) (Helms, 1995) to Asian Americans. Through an exploratory

theory-building approach, this study asked: How do Asian Americans experience racism? How does race shape their identity? Do they identify with a larger Asian American collective? The complicated interplay of the aforementioned questions had heretofore remained largely unexamined for Asian Americans.

The interdisciplinary field of Asian American Studies takes race as one of its most important topics of analysis. Across a broad spectrum of disciplines, including sociology (Aguilar-San Juan, 1994; Espiritu, 1992), law (Ancheta, 1998; Kim, 1999), media studies (Hamamoto, 1994; Lee, 1999), literary criticism (Cheng, 2001; Lowe, 1996; Palumbo-Liu, 1999) , and history (Okihiro, 1994; Takaki, 1989), there exists a broad acknowledgement of the centrality of "race" and the dynamics of oppression and racism in the experiences of Asian Americans. Despite this widespread consensus, the *psychological* manifestations of race and racism have *not* received attention from those who have conducted psychological research on Asian Americans. Yet there is ample evidence to suggest that race is critical in shaping the psychological experiences of Asian Americans.

Asian Americans may find themselves in an unusual predicament: on one hand, widespread notions of the "model minority myth" (Osajima, 2000) dictate that Asians really do not suffer from racism, as evidenced by the high median incomes and stellar academic achievement often *attributed* to them (Ancheta, 1998; Cheng & Yang, 2000). On the other hand, Asians remain the emblematic *foreigner* in the U.S., from historical exclusions from legal citizenship to contemporary anti-Asian hate crimes and post-9/11 racial profiling. Excluded-yet-retained, "not quite not white" (Bhabha, 1994), Asian Americans are caught in a baffling and contradictory position, squarely situated within

the complex matrix of race relations in the U.S. The psychological negotiations of these racial dynamics demand increased attention from theorists and researchers.

Psychological research on racial identity has burgeoned in the past thirty years, yet these efforts have not rigorously theorized the unique meaning and significance of race and racial identity for Asian Americans. In recognition of this need, theorists like Janet Helms have attempted to be more inclusive of non-Black People of Color in their theorizing. Yet, even as Helms broadened her model from *Black* racial identity to *People of Color* racial identity (Helms, 1995), only the wording of the scale items was changed; the theoretical concepts developed for an African American context remained unaltered. Helms argued that racial minorities have been subjected to similar oppressions based on the color of their skin, yet the social construction of "race" for Asian Americans stemmed from vastly different historical and political trajectories than that of African Americans. While a few researchers have tested the PCRIAS with Asian Americans, no published study has established the validity of this model for Asian Americans.

An additional contribution of the current study is the use of a mixed methods design that integrates qualitative and quantitative methods. The choice of a mixed methodology is informed by the recognition of the need for foundational exploratory data that can lead to theory building for this under-researched topic. By integrating these two paradigms, this dissertation utilized both open-ended qualitative questions and an existing measure of racial identity attitudes in order to investigate the construct of racial identity.

Asian Americans are situated in an especially complicated and contradictory position in U.S. racial discourse and thereby warrant much more rigorous investigation. This study was launched from a psychological vantage point, yet bears relevance to

broader interdisciplinary debates on race and Asian Americans as well. The research in this dissertation represents an important initial step that will shed light on the concept of racial identity especially as it relates to Asian Americans, a group that has been understudied in psychological research on race. This clears the way for a much needed body of theory and research that, for instance, can start to understand the processes involved when a client comes in to therapy and denies the racial aspects of her/his identity.

Chapter II: Review of the literature

In the U.S., "Asian" is a racial construction used to categorize an economically, ethnically, and politically heterogeneous group of people. This shifting racial construction continues to be shaped by potent contemporary racial discourses. It is startling, then, to note the lack of psychological research that has investigated the racial experiences of Asian Americans. This dissertation addressed this omission by focusing on Asian Americans and the psychological processes involved in the encounter between the socio-political construct of race and the individually negotiated sense of identity.

In a review of the relevant theoretical and research literature, this chapter will first provide a broad rationale for the need to expand current psychological perspectives on race and Asian Americans. Through a survey of some of the key interdisciplinary scholarship from Asian American Studies, the first section of this chapter will assert the historical and social significance of race for Asian Americans. Importantly though, these analyses remain silent on the psychological and intrapsychic dimensions of these phenomena. In a review of the extant research on Asian Americans, some of the major trends will be identified in order to note that race and racism have been under-theorized and under-researched. In particular, the conflation of/confusion between the concepts of race and ethnicity will be identified as a major theoretical confound at the core of this omission.

In light of the pressing need for a clearer theoretical conceptualization of race in psychological research, the second section of this chapter will review the research and theory on racism and mental health, noting the focus on African Americans and the omission of Asian Americans. This will lead to a detailed review of Janet Helms's racial

identity theory and the major research applications and conclusions that it has generated over the past thirty years. Helms's model has received both attention and criticism; despite its flaws, I maintain that the construct of racial identity is relevant for Asian Americans and deserves rigorous attention. The sparse research on Asian Americans and race/racism will be reviewed in order to highlight the relevance of racial identity and to assert the necessity of a coherent theory developed specifically for this population. Given the dearth of research in this area, a mixed methods approach seemed warranted in order to bridge existing quantitative scales with qualitative data. This complementary approach enabled both an investigation of the generalizability of Helms's model for Asian Americans and the exploration of some foundational questions about the distinct contours of Asian American racial identity that would elude strictly quantitative approaches.

Section I - The Significance of Race for Asian Americans

The most fundamental premise of this dissertation was that current understandings of the psychological processes of racial identity for Asian Americans are poorly understood and demand more rigorous research and theoretical elaboration. And yet, a survey of the interdisciplinary scholarship generated by the field of Asian American Studies amply demonstrated the historical, social and political significance of race for Asian Americans.

Interdisciplinary scholarship on race and Asian Americans

When one speaks of the arbitrary and constructed nature of "race" it is perhaps nowhere more evident than the case of the "Asian" in U.S. racial discourse. Suspended between stereotypes of the foreign threat and model minority, Asian Americans are both

celebrated and denigrated. The predicament of Asian Americans, then, must be recognized as especially ambivalent. Retained as the poster child for the American dream, the Asian American success story is championed in popular discourse as a lesson for other minorities who struggle. Reviled as the perpetual foreigner, the Asian American remains quintessentially "other," unassimilable and un-American. How, then, are Asian Americans themselves impacted by their position in these contradictory racial dynamics?

To start with, it is important to reiterate that Asians in America are grouped together based on the social construct of race. There are at least 25 different Asian ethnic groups, ranging from Hmong and Pakistani to Japanese and Vietnamese (Uba, 1994). The diversity abounds, but in America, these groups are united under the racial category "Asian." In the U.S, this *racial* construction evolved out of a complicated history of labor demands, legal decisions, immigration policies, census practices, and media representations. The interdisciplinary scholarship on Asian Americans has devoted much attention to the concept of race—from the historical, cultural, economic, and social processes of racial formation, to the current political manifestations of racial inequality. For Asians, race has been defined by a shared oppression resulting from "racialization," defined as the extension of racial meaning to a relationship, social practice, or group (Omi & Winant, 1994). As such, a brief review of the historical context of racialization is warranted.

Historical and political backdrop of racialization

> In the last century and a half, the American *citizen* has been defined over and against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally.
>
> Lisa Lowe, 1996, p 4

Scholars have argued that historically, Asia has been used as a reference point of the "other" in order to define the boundaries of whiteness, especially during critical historical crisis points in the struggle to secure U.S. national identity (Lowe, 1996; Palumbo-Liu, 1999). Cultural representations—from the "heathen Chinee" to the "horde of Hindoos"—constructed an exoticized/demonized "other" in the national imaginary (Lee, 1999; Takaki, 1989). The racialization of Asians as a threatening and peculiar "other" in turn, served to evoke suspicion and justify a litany of injustices, from immigration exclusions to the denial of citizenship rights (Ancheta, 1998; Lee, 1999, Eng, 2001).

In her influential book *Immigrant Acts,* Lisa Lowe (1996) illuminates the complicated political dynamics and social antagonisms involved in the racialization of Asians in America. She focuses on the role of race in the contradictions between immigration, labor, and the need for a coherent national identity in the historical context of U.S. imperialism and global economic development. The central tension in her study is the contradictory position of the racialized Asian as inside *and* outside the nation. That is, immigration and labor demands placed the bodily Asian inside the nation-state, market and labor force, while cultural and discursive practices placed the symbolic racialized Asian perpetually outside of national culture and citizenship. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to review the history of legal decisions, immigration policies, and cultural representations affecting Asian Americans. Instead, this cursory and incomplete survey has been sketched to assert the significant impact of race and racial discourse on the historical trajectory and contemporary experiences of Asian Americans. It is to these contemporary experiences that I now turn.

Contemporary contradictions of race for Asian Americans

After the passage of the 1965 Hart-Celler Immigration and Naturalization Act lifting the prior restrictions on Asian immigration, the population of Asian Americans drastically increased (Ong & Liu, 2000). The influx of a large number of Asian immigrants and Southeast Asian refugees in the past four decades has been viewed by many as an economic threat (Kuo, 1995). The passage of Proposition 187 in California (denying access to human services to undocumented immigrants) and the security threats in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, provided further evidence of the persistence of anti-immigrant sentiment.

Concomitant to this dramatic increase in numbers, the social construction of race for Asian Americans underwent a significant metamorphosis—highlighting the fluid nature of 'race' (Omi & Winant, 1994). The term "Asian American" first emerged as a common rallying point for students involved in the civil rights protests of the 1960's. While these Asian American activists were charting a new collective identity to mobilize against injustice, a new twist to the racial construction of Asian Americans emerged, the "model minority." The term "model minority" was first used in 1966 by William Peterson, a sociologist praising formerly interned Japanese Americans for their attempts to reintegrate into society without making demands on the state and without exercising their citizenship rights, and therefore acting as model people of color (Lee, 1999). This was, of course, juxtaposed and drawn in opposition to Blacks, who were seen as troublesome and rising up in arms in the Civil Rights Movement.

Consequently, it has been theorized that the contemporary racialization of Asian Americans has evolved along two primary axes: racialization as foreigners or non-

Americans, and racialization as the model minority (Ancheta, 1998). Both forms of racialization are hypothesized to have consequences to the psychological functioning of Asian Americans. These seemingly contrary axes speak to the fluid logic of racialization.

Racialization as foreigner has been reflected in the WWII internment of over 100,000 Japanese (Takaki, 1989) and in the treatment of Asian American GI's during the Vietnam War (Loo, 1994; Loo, Singh, Scurfield, & Kilauano, 1998). An MSN-NBC headline during the 1998 Winter Olympics read: "(Michelle) Kwan defeated by American." This failure to acknowledge Kwan's "Americanness" is symptomatic of the discursive exclusion of Asians from U.S. cultural citizenship. Additionally, pop culture and media representations continue to be a vehicle for the portrayal of Asians as foreign and/or threatening. Racist ideologies continue to be disseminated; from hyper-feminized exotic geishas and effeminate eunuch-like men to dog-eating refugee neighbors and crafty convenience store clerks speaking accented English, images of the 'oriental other' remain well-circulated in popular media (Hamamoto, 1994; Mok, 1998, Eng, 2001). Further, common sense discourse and media representations generally fail to differentiate among diverse Asian ethnicities, furthering the social construction of Asians as homogeneous and "other."

Yet again, in another permutation of the contradictions of race, Asian Americans are alternately depicted as the model citizen, the poster child for the American Dream. Asian Americans are generally regarded as well-educated, high achieving, upwardly mobile model minorities who have few difficulties for adjustment (Sue and Morishima, 1982). All Asians, regardless of class, status as immigrant or refugee, or ethnicity, are assumed to have a high valuation of education and an ethic of hard work, thereby

ignoring the educational and economic inequities among Asian Americans (Ancheta, 1998). This "model minority myth" minimizes the historical and current realities of racism and oppression that Asians must face. In addition, the repercussions reach across a wide domain, ranging from legal and educational policies like affirmative action (Ancheta, 1998) to assumptions about mental health (Uba, 1994) and access to public health resources (Wong, Chng, & Choi, 1998). Additionally, scholars have argued that this model minority myth has been used as a weapon against the struggles of Blacks and Latinos (Prashad, 2000).

Shortcomings of Interdisciplinary Race Theory and the need for psychological inquiry

The theories on race formations offered through Asian American Studies provide a welcome focus on social structures and historical and political dynamics, yet these analyses neglect to consider the importance of individual manifestations of race for Asian Americans. Too often, social and political theories exclude any account of the individual factors involved in the psychological negotiation of racism. Indeed, there exists a general consensus that "race" is not a biological truth, but a socially constructed classification stemming from complex histories and social dynamics and based on *perceptions* of phenotypic and cultural similarity. However, the psychological reality remains: what Asian Americans do have in common is a shared legacy of oppression and socialization that causes them to be treated and studied *as though* they belong to a homogenous racial group. Race, then, becomes relevant, not because of a biological reality, but because externally defined concepts of "Asian" lead to similar treatment and socialization, which results in the development of related psychological characteristics (Helms, 1995). It is

this treatment and socialization, as well as the resulting psychological characteristics that are the focus of this dissertation.

Review and critique of Asian American psychology

Though ostensibly distant from the concerns of psychology as a discipline, the aforementioned analyses and insights have a great deal to offer to psychological research and theory. Yet psychologists have largely neglected to incorporate these theoretical insights. Young and Takeuchi (1998) note "more is known about the details of racism against Asian Americans within the socio-historical context of the United States…than about the psychological impact of racism on Asian American individuals." Nevertheless, psychologists have remained largely caught up in confusions and conflations with vague multicultural constructs. The confusion between the constructs of race and ethnicity represents a primary confound in psychological research.

Current trends in psychological research on Asian Americans

Asian Americans are the second fastest growing racial minority group (after Latina/os) in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). As of 2000, there were more than 10.2 million Asian Americans in the United States, representing an increase of 46% since 1990 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). This rise in number has brought greater attention to the psychological needs of Asian Americans (Kim & Omizo, 2003). In response, researchers have produced a sizable body of psychological research on Asian Americans. Despite a recent increase in attention to the racial experiences of Asian Americans (Alvarez & Juang, 2010; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal & Esquilin, 2007, Yoo & Lee, 2005, Yoo & Lee 2008), researchers have historically focused primarily on vaguely defined cultural

constructs (such as Asian values, cultural orientation), ethnicity, personality patterns, nonracial (e.g., acculturation) sources of stress, under-utilization of mental health services, and the prevalence of mental illness (Uba, 1994). This research has failed to grapple with the complexities of racial identity in the experiences of Asian Americans.

Current understandings of psychological distress for Asian Americans are often reduced to a clash of cultural values (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism), or inter-generational conflicts within families due to differing acculturation levels (Iwamasa, 1997; B. S. Kim, Atkinson, & Umemoto, 2001; B. S. Kim & Omizo, 2003; Kurasaki, Okazaki, & Sue, 2002; Lee & Zane, 1998; Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000). With this curiously de-politicized approach to Asian Americans, we are left with research that produces such statements as: "Core values…important to U.S. Asian groups…[are] silence, non-confrontation, moderation in behavior, self-control, patience, humility, modesty, and simplicity…These characteristics point to an introspective, self-effacing personality…an introverted type" (Sodowsky, Kwan, & Pannu, 1995, p146).
A primary assertion of multicultural research is that psychologists need to become familiar with the cultural backgrounds and lifestyles of diverse ethnic groups (Bernal & Padilla, 1982; Sue & Zane, 1987).

Kim and his colleagues (1999) further this type of generalization in the development of a scale that aims to measure "Asian values." With the purported intent to illuminate the role of culture in psychological functioning and avoid misdiagnosis and poor client-therapist matches, this line of research is loaded with an array of unstated assumptions. A reading of the scale items reveals the assumed linkages between Asian values and Confucian thought. While Confucianism is of unequivocal importance in

certain Asian cultures, the cultural dimensions of "Asianness" are privileged over the harsh political realities of the social construction of Asian as a racial group. In addition, the uncritical generalization to *all* Asian cultures must be questioned.

It is thus that well-intentioned multicultural researchers and theoreticians produce uncritically broad cultural statements that become incorrectly generalized to a very diverse racial group. This confusion is pervasive and can be found in much of multicultural research on Asian Americans, and unfortunately it often serves to reify the very hegemonic stereotypes that multicultural psychology endeavors to subvert.

A survey of three major integrative texts on Asian American psychology reveals this trend (Hall & Okazaki, 2002; Lee & Zane, 1998; Uba, 1994). For example, the newest of the three texts, *Asian American psychology: The science of lives in context* (Hall & Okazaki, 2002), devotes extensive coverage to topics such as cultural orientation, cultural identity, culturally appropriate research methodology, and a range of other "culture-specific" models and issues. Concomitantly, the words race, racism, and racial identity are relegated to a scant ten pages, scattered throughout the book. It is thus that much of the literature on Asian American mental health, while purportedly advocating the importance of social difference and context, ends up privileging vague cultural themes at the expense of any rigorous analysis of the political and racial dimensions of the Asian American experience. It is worth noting, though, that the most recent integrative Asian American psychology texts have shifted their attention by increasing their treatment of race and racism and its relevance for Asian Americans (Tewari & Alvarez, 2009; Leong, Ebreo, Kinoshita, Inman, Yang, & Fu 2007).

Unpacking the confound between race and ethnicity

Multicultural psychologists often study culture in a very broad and often vague way using operationalizations that are replete with confounds (Helms, 1994). For the purposes of this dissertation, ethnicity may be thought of as an *intra*-group phenomenon, a grouping that is based on a sense of shared values, attitudes, and culture, such as language, tradition, food, music, and knowledge of group history (Helms & Talleyrand, 1997). Race on the other hand, refers to an *inter*-group dynamic based on social constructions that attribute cultural meanings onto bodies that are perceived as having similar phenotypes (Lee, 1999). Significantly, race and its social construction involve differential power relations and dynamics of political oppression. Hence the commonalities within racial groups have more to do with common experiences of conditions of privilege, domination or oppression.

In order to ameliorate the problematic trends of Asian American psychological research, the confound between race and ethnicity must be interrogated. While *racial* dynamics anchor and organize the commonality of Asians in the U.S. through historical and contemporary oppression and exclusion—race is generally not as privileged as culture in psychology's characterizations of Asian Americans (Uba, 2002). Uba elaborates her critique by noting how "In most 'multicultural curriculum' ideas, [this trend] has taken the form of sugarcoating or denying racial dynamics by looking at minority groups only as cultural groups and ignoring the relevance of racism" (Uba, 2002, p. 81). This familiar, more palatable, and less polemic framing of social difference has led to the silencing of the harsh realities of racism and injustice. In order to bridge psychology with the aforementioned interdisciplinary scholarship, it must be recognized

that *race*, as a specific psycho-socio-political construct, while overlapping, is not the same as other terms that broadly connote within-group similarities such as ethnicity and culture (Helms & Richardson, 1997; Helms & Talleyrand, 1997).

The widespread confusion or interchangeable use of race and ethnicity, especially in the context of Asian American psychological research, has the effect of camouflaging the very specific and politically charged nature of race and racism (Helms, 1994), especially as it interacts with intrapsychic, interpersonal, and institutional psychological phenomena. It has been argued that while the two constructs of race and ethnicity do overlap, the specifically political dimensions of race become manifested in distinct psychological phenomena that are more amenable to operationalization (Helms, 1994). Studies comparing the relationship between ethnic identity and racial identity concluded that understanding about one's race does not necessarily confer an understanding about one's culture, and vice versa (Cokley, 2005; Pope-Davis, Liu, Ledesma-Jones, & Nevitt, 2000).

It is important to note that the recent research and writing on racial microaggressions by Derald Sue and colleagues has initiated an important shift in psychological research on Asian Americans wherein increased attention has been shed on racism and Asian Americans (Sue, Bucceri, et.al., 2007; Sue, Capodilupo, et.al., 2007). Despite these efforts, the trend of minimizing race and political tensions in favor of the more palatable multicultural themes of culture and ethnicity continue and bear an especially charged consequence for Asian Americans. The obscuring of race only reifies the construction of Asian Americans as the "model minority," the silent, hard-working portrait of the American dream, immune from racism and free from complaint and

political protest. Thus, this dissertation attempts to challenge these trends by addressing the specific meanings of race and the nuanced dimensions of racial identity for Asian Americans. From here, I turn to a review of the extant psychological research on race, racial identity, and mental health.

Section II - Race, racial identity and mental health

> You know, it's not the world that was my oppressor, because what the world does to you, if the world does it to you long enough and effectively enough, you begin to do to yourself.
>
> James Baldwin, 1973

While the aforementioned critiques of psychological research were directed specifically at the lack of a coherent psychological theory of the racial experiences of Asian Americans, it must be noted that psychologists have advanced a significant body of research on race and African Americans. This section will trace the trajectories of the body of psychological research on race and racism, with a specific focus on Racial Identity Theory (Helms, 1990).

Racism and mental health

Racism and its effect on mental health, as a topic of psychological theorizing and empirical investigation, have received a good deal of attention. Definitions of "racism" abound and exist across an array of disciplines, usually incorporating elements of power differentials, economic underpinnings, and manifestations across intrapsychic, interpersonal, institutional and cultural domains. For the purposes of this dissertation, racism was broadly defined as consisting of: "Two interlocking dimensions: (a) an institutional mechanism of domination and (b) a corresponding ideological belief that justifies the oppression of people whose physical features and cultural patterns differ

from those of the politically and socially dominant racial group—Whites" (Thompson & Neville, 1999).

In an issue of *The Counseling Psychologist* completely devoted to the understanding of racism and mental health, Thompson and Neville (1997) summarize a tremendous amount of theory and empirical data on racism and formulate conceptualizations of its manifestations in psychological functioning. They posit that racism, regardless of whether it is acknowledged or not, affects the psychological development of all racial groups and therefore inevitably becomes relevant for psychotherapists.

From poor health outcome measures such as high blood pressure (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999) and psychiatric symptoms such as depression and obsessive-compulsivity (Klonoff, Landrine, & Ullman, 1999), to barriers to academic achievement such stereotype threat (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995) and college adjustment (LePhuoc, Kellerman, Rundell, & Lee, 2000), it is believed that racism is a primary contributor to this negativity and the marginality of the Black community.

There is a growing body of literature that attempts to understand how the experience of racism affects African Americans. Researchers have theorized about the relationship between perceptions of racism and mental health (Franklin & Boyd-Franklin, 2000; Thompson & Neville, 1999) and have empirically tested this relationship (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Klonoff et al., 1999). The stressful impact of racism has been explored in numerous studies (Clark et al., 1999; Sanders Thompson, 2002; Utsey & Ponterotto, 1996). Perceptions of a racially hostile climate predicted poor college adjustment for college minority students (LePhuoc et al., 2000). Caveats are offered that warn against

the misinterpretation of these results because research on *perceived* racist discrimination should not be used to make inferences about *actual* racist discrimination because researchers cannot test that directly (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). While these studies highlight the importance of psychological research and theorizing about racism and its effects on people of color, there exists a theoretical inadequacy to address the subjective within-group differences with regard to how race is processed.

An overview of racial identity theory

A central assertion of this dissertation was that race and racism play a significant role in the experiences of Asian Americans. The critical issue, however, is to theorize the psychological processes that mediate the interpretation and response to the experience of racist phenomenon (Helms, 1990). The aforementioned complications with the operationalization and measurement of reactions to racism highlight the critical need to attend to the subjective psychological processes and dynamics that are called upon to negotiate these phenomena.

Initiated by Erik Erickson's seminal writings (Erikson, 1964), psychologists have increasingly sought the answers to these questions through the study of identity and identity development. In an integrative review of racial, gender, sexual, class and ethnic identity research, Frable (1997) has written:

> Identity is the individual's psychological relationship to social category systems [gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, and class]. Identity is also the term most often invoked by those who struggle to create meaning and purpose when culturally significant, ideologically powerful social category systems clash with personal and collective group member experiences. (p 140)

In the context of race and racial identity, it has been argued that people socialized within an oppressive system with racial hierarchies may be vulnerable to uphold the racial status

quo (Thompson & Neville, 1999). People of color may internalize racist beliefs because they are rewarded for these efforts by being more acceptable to the White majority.

Placing special emphasis on the complex within-group variability of identity formation dynamics with regard to the management of racial stimuli, Janet Helms advanced a highly influential theory and widely researched model of racial identity development (Helms, 1990). Racial identity theory concerns the psychological implications of racial group membership, that is, the belief systems that evolve in reaction to *perceived* differential racial-group membership. "Racial identity measurement deals with the psychological consequences to individuals of being socialized in a society in which a person is either privileged (i.e., white identity) or disadvantaged (i.e., Black and other people of color identity) because of his or her racial classification" (Helms, 1996, p. 147). Again, the biological realities or illusions of race are not relevant aspects of racial identity conceptualizations. Rather, the focus is on examining a person's internalized reactions to being treated as though he or she belongs to a "real" racial group.

Racial identity theory has offered exciting advances in the way race and racial groups are conceptualized in psychological research. By a welcome focus on the *within-group* differences of racial groups, this line of thinking has forced psychology to become more sophisticated about its reductive oversimplifications of the between-group differences of racial groups. Models of racial identity offer a framework for understanding whether and/or how an individual's oppressed racial status is organized and integrated into her or his personality. That is to say, not every member of a racial group will feel the same way about this group membership. While other models have

been developed (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1989; Cross & Vandiver, 2001; Kim, 2001; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997), Helms's Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS) has been the most extensively researched (Cokley, 2007; Helms, 2007). Given the scarcity of research instruments developed for Asian Americans and racial identity, Helms's scale was the focus of this dissertation.

Helms (1990) originated this theory based on the model of "Nigrescence," the process by which Black people evolve from a self-view in which "Blackness" is degraded to a self-view in which they are firmly secure with "Blackness" (Cross, 1971 as cited in Helms, 1990). Racial identity theory proposes four "statuses" that correspond to certain world-views that individuals use to organize thoughts, feelings, and behaviors toward both oneself as a member of a racial group and members of the dominant racial group, i.e., Whites. Helms has written:

> Each time a person is exposed to or believes he or she is exposed to a racial event, the ego selects the dominant racial identity status to assist the person in interpreting the event. Once an interpretation is made, the schemata then respond in ways that are consistent with the dictates of the status and ideally protect the person's sense of well-being and self-esteem. (Helms, 1995, p. 187)

These four statuses were originally termed stages, but were renamed (Helms, 1995) in order to emphasize the fluidity and dynamic interplay that exists between the statuses and the fact that an individual may exhibit the characteristics of more than one status, even as one is predominant. Carter (1995) argued that race is an integral part of personality and racial identity statuses are the mechanism for racial influences in each person's personality. The four statuses are as follow (Helms, 1995): **Conformity** involves the devaluing of one's own racial group, obliviousness to racism and one's racial group history, and adaptation to and internalization of White society's standards and stereotypes of one's own group. **Dissonance** involves disequilibrium over the

previous status due to new awareness about racism; confusion and uncertainty ensue around self-definition and own-group identity. **Immersion-Emersion** involves an idealization of one's racial group and denigration of dominant White ideologies, conceptualized as polar opposites with conformity, characterized by anger and hypervigilance. **Internalization** is seen as the most "mature" and developed of racial identity statuses, characterized by a capacity to value one's own racial group and an ability and desire to value and collaborate with members of other racial groups.

The central developmental theme of racial identity is the recognition and management of the psychological manifestations of internalized racism. In this regard, the four statuses are conceptualized as developmental model with individuals progressing from least developmentally mature or sophisticated to most mature or sophisticated. Maturation is triggered by a combination of cognitive-affective complexity within the individual and race-related stimuli (Helms, 1995). As such, "mature" and "sophisticated" are postulated to have mental health correlates; racial identity development is placed in a normative model ranging from pathology to health and self-actualization.

Racial identity development and mental health: A review of the research findings

The primary research application of Helms's operationalized scale has been as an independent variable in order to predict a wide array of mental health-related dependent variables. Some of these have included: self-esteem (Parham & Helms, 1985a), self-actualization (Parham & Helms, 1985b), stress and coping (Neville, Heppner, & Wang, 1997), and psychopathology (Carter, 1991), to name a few. In each of these studies, participants receive four scores for each of the statuses. In general, researchers have

hypothesized that scores from each of the statuses would predict lowest psychological functioning in the first status, "Conformity" and highest psychological functioning and mental health in the fourth status, "Internalization."

"Conformity" attitudes, for example, and its attendant psychological dynamics of denial, internalized racism, and self-hate, are expected to predict psychological maladaptivity and psychopathology. Carter (1991) reported that conformity attitudes were associated with higher levels of anxiety, memory impairment, paranoia, hallucinations, alcohol concerns, and general psychological distress.

The second status, "Dissonance" is characterized by confusion and disequilibrium and is linked to the experience of some racist event that causes a disruption in the denial of the "Conformity" status. Due to the ephemeral nature of the construct, this status has tended to exhibit the lowest reliability estimates and has been criticized extensively (Fischer, Tokar, & Serna, 1998; Ponterotto, 1989; Yanico, Swanson, & Tokar, 1994). Nevertheless, researchers have reported links between "Dissonance" attitudes and low mental health indices (Pyant & Yanico, 1991) and high reports of cultural stress (Neville et al., 1997).

The third status, "Immersion-Emersion," involves a rigid, over-identification with one's own racial group and is associated with and a strong mistrust of the dominant White majority and the consequent physical and psychological withdrawal into one's own racial group. Even as this status is theorized to be more sophisticated and mature than the previous two, researchers have reported that "Immersion-Emersion" attitudes are significant predictors of the following: avoidance, compromised problem-solving appraisal, and high levels of stress (Neville et al., 1997); memory impairment and drug

concerns (Carter, 1991); as well as high levels of anxiety, hypersensitivity, anger, and feelings of inadequacy (Parham & Helms, 1985b).

"Internalization," the final status, is postulated as the most mature, self-actualized status, with the attendant psychological dynamics of cognitive complexity and a balanced integration of the conflicted dimensions of the prior three statuses. Researchers have reported that "Internalization" attitudes significantly predict high internal locus of control (Martin & Hall, 1992), high levels of goal directed behavior (Jackson & Neville, 1998), and low levels of cultural stress (Neville et al., 1997).

It is important to note that these research studies were all conducted on African Americans and their particular racial experiences. While there may be important historical reasons for this trend, the time has come for a more rigorous theorization and investigation of Asian Americans racial identity. In the following section, the theoretical assumptions and research findings of the aforementioned research were scrutinized for their relevance and generalizeability to Asian Americans.

Section III - Toward a theory and model of Asian American racial identity

> Racialized thinking and racial categories are biological and anthropological fictions, but they have taken on lives of their own as social "facts."
> Espiritu, Fujita Rony, Kibria, and Lipsitz, 2000

> If you're treated a certain way you become a certain kind of person. If certain things are described to you as being real they're real for you whether they're real or not.
> James Baldwin, 1973

In this third and final section, I reviewed the body of extant psychological research on race and Asian Americans in order to further the rationale for the necessity of a coherent and theoretically rigorous model of Asian American racial identity. As the quantitative centerpiece of this study, Helms's People of Color Racial Identity Attitudes

Scale was tested for its generalizeability to Asian Americans. Strengths and critiques of the model were outlined and used to dictate the research questions of the study. The contours of this model were dictated by the results of the current study.

The psychological relevance of race for Asian Americans

Having established the fact that the term "Asian American" is a racial construct based not on culture or tradition, but common legal and political oppression, numerous questions remain regarding the theorization and assessment of Asian American racial identity. As previously mentioned, Asian Americans are not homogenous with regard to the perception of racism (Kuo, 1995). It has been hypothesized that the awareness of the politics of race and racism may moderate the negative impact of racist events (Fischer & Shaw, 1999). It is alarming then to see reports that Asian American parents rarely socialized their children with regard to race and racism (Chen, 1998, as cited in Hughes & Chen, 1999), and that when they did, it was through fatalistic coping messages related to a self-perceptions of "foreigner" status (Alvarez, 2000). Psychologists have speculated that recent immigrants may minimize their experiences with racism (Uba, 2002; Goto, et.al., 2002) and that their coping strategies often utilize emotion-focused cognitive approaches like avoidance and optimistic comparison (Kuo, 1995). In addition, it has been hypothesized that there may be a tendency to identify more with ethno-cultural group membership than racial group membership (Espiritu, 1992; Kibria, 1998).

Yet from anti-Asian sentiment and racial hate crime to the White standard of beauty and enduring racist images in the media stereotypes, race persists in the experience of Asian Americans. Mok (1998b) noted how standards of attractiveness have led to such a high demand for plastic surgery that UCLA's medical school has

implemented specific training rotations that teach surgeons techniques on to adding epicanthic folds to Asian eyelids to make them look more European. Reports of low self-esteem, self-consciousness in children, a desire to be different, and racial distancing (Mok, 1998b) indicate that Asian Americans may be quite ambivalent about an Asian identity so encumbered with negative stereotypes (Mok, 1998b). These factors pose intriguing questions about how race and racism become manifested in the lives of Asian Americans.

Extant psychological research on Asian Americans and race

In order to further argue for the necessity and utility of racial identity research, I reviewed the research literature on Asian Americans and race. Two studies by Ying (1996; 2000) reported links between perceived racist discrimination and negative mental health outcomes for Chinese Americans. However, the researcher offers no theoretical explanation of this link or the within-group differences in her samples.

A recent study (Goto, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2002) investigated the experience of discrimination reported by Chinese Americans. Results indicated that 21% (of the 1,503 respondents) reported some sort of unfair treatment due to race or ethnicity, based on the following two questions:

> Now thinking over your whole life, have you ever been treated unfairly or badly because you speak a different language or you speak with an accent?
>
> Now thinking over your whole life, have you ever been treated unfairly or badly because of your race or ethnicity?

Relying on the similarity and contact hypotheses of Henry Triandis (Triandis, 1971, as cited in Goto et al., 2002), researchers expected that higher levels of acculturation would predict lower levels of perceived discrimination. Contrary to their expectations, higher

income, more formal education, and higher levels of acculturation were actually associated with higher levels of perceived discrimination. This finding highlights the inadequacy of cultural theories that fail to incorporate a more rigorous understanding of the political and oppressive dimensions of race specific to Asian Americans.

In a sociological study, Kuo (1995) explored how Asian Americans view American society with regard to racial discrimination, the incidence of discrimination and the ways in which Asian Americans cope with racial discrimination. The data, collected in the early 1980's, revealed that Asian Americans displayed a great deal of heterogeneity with regard to their cultural values and their perceptions of their minority status. With regard to frequency of experience of racial discrimination, males reported more than females; American-born Asians, again, reported more than foreign born; Japanese and Filipino subjects in all categories reported more discrimination than Korean and Chinese. Overall, 15%, 30%, and 39% percent reported discrimination in housing, occupational and other situations, respectively. In addition, it was reported that Asian Americans as a whole tended toward an emotion-focused, cognitive approach to coping strategies over a direct action problem-focused coping. For example, avoidance and optimistic comparison would be utilized over advice-seeking or taking the issue to a civil rights agency. The underlying factors contributing to this coping style were unclear, but postulated to be related to "traditional" cultural values.

More recently, research on the effect of racism on Asian Americans has expanded to include findings that experiences of racism were associated with higher odds of having a DSM-IV disorder (Gee, Spencer, Chen, Yip & Takeuchi, 2007), psychological distress (Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008) as well as chronic conditions such as heart disease, pain

and respiratory illness (Gee, Spencer, Chen, & Takeuchi, 2007). Researchers have also attempted to identify potential buffers and or mediators of the relationship between racial discrimination and psychological well-being among Asian Americans, but interestingly, *ethnic* identity was the variable that was studied in these efforts (Lee, 2003; Yoo & Lee, 2005; Yoo & Lee, 2008). As previously noted, a promising area of research has examined Asian Americans' experience of racial microagressions (Sue, Bucceri, et.al., 2007), though again, no theoretical or conceptual framework is provided regarding the heterogeneity of ***interpretations*** of these racial experiences.

In one of the only theoretically grounded research studies, Ahmed (1998) utilized discourse analysis in a qualitative investigation of the constructed meaning of racism for Bangladeshis born and raised in the U.K. She found that these second-generation young adults (ages 18-32) maintained an array of explanations and rationales that helped them negotiate their experiences with racism. These constructed meanings were often contradictory; participants minimized the presence of racism by noting improvements over the past, yet they also revealed their awareness that a more subtle form of racism was still present in their lives. This shift from blatant to hidden, then, was interpreted to mean that little could be done to intervene or improve contemporary racism in society.

The results from Ahmed's study allude to what bell hooks has called "the madness of forming self and identity in white supremacist capitalist patriarchy." (hooks, 1995, p. 143). It is such that this dissertation aims to formulate a coherent theoretical formulation of the process of racial identity in order to detect and decipher the psychological phenomena involved in Asian Americans' experience with race and racism.

Helms's Model and Asian Americans

In a significant theoretical move Helms (1995) broadened the scope of her model in order to include all people of color in her conceptual definitions of race and racism. The revised model and scale, the People of Color Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (PCRIAS) (Helms, 1995), is based on Helms's original Black Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (RIAS-B) (Helms, 1990) and the Minority Identity Development (MID) model (Atkinson et al., 1989). In a subsequent publication, Helms (1996) offered the following theoretical rationale for her shift:

> The process of racial identity development for Blacks is not incongruent with that of other disenfranchised groups of color in many respects…the theoretical issues…also pertain to other groups of color.

Helms has argued that members of all socio-racial groups, regardless of specific racial or ethnic group classification, are assumed to experience a racial identity developmental process that can be described by the four statuses of her model. However, it must be noted that the meaning of each status might vary between racial groups due to an array of factors. These variations in meaning, however, have yet to be explicitly investigated. Instead, the studies that have used this scale with Asian American populations (Alvarez, 1997; Alvarez & Helms, 2001; Carter & Constantine, 2000; Iwamato & Liu, 2010; Kohatsu et al., 2000; Liu, 2002; Pope, 2000,) have operated under the untested assumption that the PCRIAS is generalizeable to Asian Americans. In addition, each of these studies attempted to detect relationships between racial identity attitudes and some index of psychological functioning. In doing so, researchers have sought to replicate the 'diagnostic' trend whereby racial identity development is conceptualized as a progression from less mature (i.e. maladaptive) to more mature (i.e. well-adjusted).

The point of departure for the current study stems from a reaction to a particular qualification of Helms rationale to broaden her model. She has written:

> Concerns related to the measurement of their racial identity should pertain to other people of color to the extent that the other groups have been socialized under similar conditions of cross-generational racial oppression, and the measure purports to assess intrapsychic reactions to such oppression. (Helms, 1995)

It is my assertion, however, that the socialization and "conditions of cross-generational racial oppression" for Asian Americans may be radically different, though not without overlap, from African Americans. Due to their unique and diverse histories of racialization, as well as their different contemporary position in U.S. racial dynamics, Asian Americans may pose significant challenges to Helms's unilateral assumptions about the generalizeability of her model to all people of color.

Inasmuch as racial identity attitude measurement concerns the recognition, interpretation, and management of racist stimuli, the historical, political, and economic specificity of Asian Americans' experiences almost certainly dictates the fact that different psychological (not to mention social) options are available for the management of racial stimuli. For example, a significant number of Asian American immigrants may have occupied privileged positions in their sending countries, providing social and psychological resources that may buffer their sense of well-being and shield them from the impact of certain kinds of structural racism. In addition, these different options may lead to different psychological consequences. In other words, aside from the implications for the theoretical conceptualization of racial identity development, these assertions have much to bear, as well, on the mental health correlates postulated by racial identity research. Factors such as the model minority myth, immigration history, the lack of racial socialization, and the option of recourse to ethnic identity (Kibria, 1998) offer

potential detours around the recognition of racism and the development of a racial identity. While significant psychologically, these detours may not necessarily be experienced as maladaptive or ego-dystonic. As such, the normative, diagnostic underpinnings of racial identity theory must be questioned for their relevance to Asian Americans.

Despite these substantial critiques of Helms's theory and model, aspects of the PCRIAS remain significant and meaningful for Asian Americans. The research on Asian Americans and their racial experiences highlights the within-group heterogeneity of this racial group and the demand for a cohesive theory of Asian American racial identity. Indeed, the general dearth of research on racial themes and Asian Americans may be attributed to a hasty and wholesale dismissal of "race" due to the failure of dominant Black/White theories of race and racial identity to capture the specificities of the Asian American experience. However, I maintain that rather than dismissing race and focusing on culture and ethnicity, psychologists must grapple with the uncharted convergences and divergences between Asian Americans and African Americans in order to further the understanding of the psychological manifestations of race and racism. Given that this psychological research on racial identity and racism is replete with theoretical uncertainties and methodological difficulties (Fischer & Shaw, 1999; Fischer, Tokar, & Serna, 1998; Helms, 1989, Cokley, 2007) and that so little research has been conducted with Asian Americans, many complications may arise in such an early stage of theorizing. This dissertation attempted to contribute to this much-needed area of research through the combination of a rigorous theoretical framework and a mixed methods innovation that bridged qualitative and quantitative approaches to psychological inquiry.

Purpose of Current Study

The aforementioned dearth of research on Asian Americans and their racial experiences dictates the need for exploratory data that can address some foundational questions. Qualitative methods are uniquely situated to address this problem; by posing open-ended questions about race, participants' responses are relatively less constrained by the Likert-type choices that force responses into the pre-established paradigms of quantitative scales. In the current study, a mixed methods approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003) enabled a shift between inductive and deductive data analytic strategies in order to bridge quantitative data from existing measures with qualitative data from open-ended questions. As a result, this study both investigated the construct validity of an existing measure *and* provided much needed exploratory, foundational empirical data about Asian American racial identity that has eluded a strictly quantitative approach.

Research questions

1. Regarding the construct validity of the PCRIAS, do responses to open-ended questions about racial identity correspond in expected ways to PCRIAS scores in this sample of Asian Americans?
2. What are the significant themes that emerge from the qualitative data that yield theory-building information on Asian Americans and their psychological negotiation of race, racism and racial identity?

Chapter III: Methods

This dissertation drew from data collected in a larger collaborative study. This larger study was a quantitative investigation that utilized cluster analysis in order to test the convergent validity of Helms's PCRIAS with two other measures of race-related constructs for Asian Americans (Chen, LePhuoc, Guzman, Rude, Dodd, 2006), but did not examine or analyze the qualitative data that was generated from three open-ended questions that were included in the original data collection. This dissertation study, through a mixed methods strategy, incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data in a distinct, yet complementary extension of the original collaborative study.

Participant recruitment

From June to July of 2002, an online survey (detailed below) was distributed to a range of organizational email lists (e.g. Asian American Psychological Association, Southeast Asian Summer Studies Institute, Organization of Chinese Americans, Asian American Journalists Association). In addition, surveys were distributed to various Asian American student associations at various universities (e.g. University of Texas, University of Pennsylvania, University of Wisconsin) through informal networks and email lists. The snowball method of recruitment was also utilized; survey participants were encouraged to forward the survey to other Asian Americans.

As an incentive, participants were informed that their participation would make them eligible to win one of two $25 gift certificates (See Appendix A). Participants interested in the gift certificate incentive were instructed to send an email with their

contact information, which would remain separate and unlinked to their responses in order to insure confidentiality.

Three hundred forty-three participants submitted completed surveys; of these, three hundred fourteen participants offered responses to the open-ended questions. The length and content of these responses varied widely; some participants gave one-word answers to questions; others offered detailed narratives that extended beyond five hundred words.

Measures

People of Color Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (PCRIAS).

The People of Color Racial Identity Attitudes Scale (Helms, 1995) is a 50 item scale (See Appendix C) with attitudinal statements rated along a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree). Originally developed as the Black Racial Identity Scale (1990), the PCRIAS was proposed by Helms to extend the application of racial identity theory across other racial minority groups.

The PCRIAS consists of four subscales designed to measure the strength of schema reflective of the different statuses of racial identity. Respondents receive a score on all four subscales; higher scores reflect greater endorsement of the subscale/racial identity status. The PCRIAS has shown acceptable reliability estimates with Asian Americans. Kohatsu et al.'s study included 160 Asian Americans and reported the following Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each PCRIAS subscale: .66 (Conformity), .65 (Dissonance), .78 (Immersion-Emersion), and .67 (Internalization). Alvarez and Helms's (2001) study included 188 Asian American college students and reported the following Cronbach's alpha coefficients: .75 (Conformity), .78 (Dissonance),

.83(Immersion-Emersion), and .61 (Internalization). In the most recent study, Iwamoto and Liu (2010) reported the following Cronbach's alpha coefficients: .71 (Conformity), .70 (Dissonance), .82 (Immersion-Emersion), and .76 (Internalization). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were: .73 for Conformity, .75 for Dissonance, .83 for Immersion-Emersion, and .66 for Internalization.

Demographic Data Sheet

Included in the online survey was a section that assessed demographic and background information about the participants (See Appendix D). This section appeared toward the end of the survey, after the quantitative scales and prior to the open-ended questions. Participants were assessed for sex, age, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, generation status, as well as the percentage of their last school/work environment that consisted of people of their ethnicity. The descriptive statistics from these demographic variables were used to test for correlations with quantitative variables and the qualitative themes that emerged in the study.

Open-Ended Questions

1. How often do you think about race?
2. How has your experience of being Asian American shaped how you think of yourself?
3. What is the most salient aspect of your identity (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religious affiliation)? Please explain briefly.

Procedures

Through a service provided by www.surveymonkey.com, an online survey was designed; this survey included the following: a consent form (See Appendix B), the PCRIAS measure detailed above (See Appendix C), a demographic assessment (See Appendix D), three open-ended questions, and a debriefing form (See Appendix E). At the beginning of the survey, participants were informed that the entire process would take from 15-20 minutes. They were given the opportunity to continue by reviewing the consent forms. As part of the design of the program, participants granted access to the survey only if they indicated that they were 18 years of age or older and that they identified themselves as Asian American.

Chapter IV: Results and Discussion

This mixed methods study analyzed data from a quantitative measure of racial identity attitudes, a demographics questionnaire, and three open-ended questions. Three hundred fourteen participants completed the quantitative measure and gave responses to the open-ended questions. This chapter will first present results of the quantitative scale and its relationship to demographic variables. The two key qualitative analytic strategies used to interpret the data will then be discussed, prior to the presentation and discussion of the results of the study.

Participants

Participants were 314 Asian American adults recruited via online electronic listserv postings and the snowball method (See Appendix F). Importantly, the sample reached beyond the standard college undergraduate populations, yielding a more diverse sample across age and ethnicity. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 68 (M = 27.26, SD = 8.64). Female participants made up 68.5% (n = 215) of the sample, while male participants made up 31.5% (n=99). With regard to generation status, roughly half of the participants (50.3%, n=158) indicated they were second-generation Asian Americans (born in the U.S. to immigrant parents), 29.0% (n=91) described themselves as "1.5 generation" (foreign-born and immigrated to the U.S. before the age of 10), 9.2% (n=29) of the sample identified themselves as third generation or higher. 10.2% (n = 32) of the sample immigrated to the U.S. after age 10.

Among the 314 respondents 96.2% (n=299) were mono-racial and 4.8% (n=15) were multiracial. In regards to the mono-racial participants, the following ethnicities

were reported: 32.5% (n=102) of respondents were Chinese, 11.1% (n=35) were Taiwanese, 11.1% (n=35) were Filipino, 9.2% (n=29) were Japanese, 8.3% (n=26) were Vietnamese, 6.1% (n=19) were Indian. 2.5% (n=8) reported mixed Asian ancestry. Bangladeshi, Cambodian, Hmong, and Pakistani respondents each comprised 0.6% (n=2) of the sample, respectively. A similarly small portion of the sample, Burmese, Laotian and Thai respondents were each 0.3% (n=1) of the sample.

Descriptive analyses

No specific hypotheses were made regarding possible within-group differences among Asian Americans, but given the demographic diversity represented in the study sample, Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were performed to test for possible differences on selected measures. In particular, a series of one-way ANOVAs were performed to examine possible differences between ethnic groups, sex, SES and generation status for the four racial identity statuses of Conformity, Dissonance, Immersion-Emersion and Internalization. To control for Type I error, a Bonferroni correction for the omnibus *F* tests was applied, resulting in an alpha of .01(.05/4) for each specific test.

The results revealed no significant differences between sexes, ethnic groups, or generational groups. There were, however, significant differences between SES groups. The results indicated significant differences between SES groups for Immersion-Emersion ($F(4, 314) = 4.08$, $p = .003$). Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the five SES groups indicate that the "Working class" respondents had higher scores on Immersion-Emersion ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.57$) compared to the "Middle middle class" respondents ($M = 2.44$, $SD = .68$), $p=.011$ and the "Upper middle class" respondents ($M = 2.41$, $SD= .64$), $p=.007$.

Identification of theoretically relevant emergent themes

Research question #1:
Regarding the construct validity of the PCRIAS, do responses to open-ended questions about racial identity correspond in expected ways to PCRIAS scores in this sample of Asian Americans?

It was determined that the responses to the open-ended questions could be subjected to a straightforward coding strategy that divided respondents into one of three mutually exclusive themes that were relevant to racial identity theory and thus amenable to mixed methods analysis to test construct validity of the PCRIAS. For the first question, "How often do you think about race," responses fell neatly into one of three categories: "all of the time" (e.g., every day, constantly) "occasionally" (e.g., once in a while, once a week) and "never or rarely" (e.g., I don't ever think about it, hardly ever), (See Table 1).

Similarly, the second question "How has your experience of being Asian American shaped how you think of yourself?" also yielded responses that were sorted into one of three categories: "large effect," "some effect," and "no effect" (See Table 2). The third question: "What is the most salient aspect of your identity," yielded responses that also fell into one of three categories. Respondents generally answered this question by listing "race" exclusively, by listing race or ethnicity along with some other dimension(s) of identity, or by listing some dimension of identity with no mention of race at all (See Table 3).

Table 1

"Thought Frequency" Distribution

How often do you think about race?	# of respondents	%
all the time (every day, constantly, etc) or very often	176	56.4%
occasionally or maybe once a week	40	12.8%
never or rarely	96	30.8%

Table 2

"Effect of Race" Distribution

How has your experience of being Asian American shaped how you think of yourself?	# of respondents	%
Large effect	180	61.2%
Some effect	74	25.2%
No effect	40	13.6%

Table 3

"Identity Salience" Distribution

What is the most salient aspect of your identity?	# of respondents	%
Race	83	26.4%
Race or Ethnicity in addition to another aspect	93	29.6%
Race not included at all	98	31.2%

As a check on the internal validity of the categorization strategy, Spearman correlations were conducted to compare all pairings of the three categorization schemes. As expected, the test revealed that there were statistically significant correlations between all three categories. In other words, the people who thought more about race also endorsed a higher effect of race on their identity and included race when listing the most salient aspect of their identity. This provides tentative evidence for the validity of the categories.

Table 4

Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficients for Qualitative Categories

	Thought frequency	**Effect of race on identity**	**Identity salience**
Thought frequency	1.000	.564**	.228**
Effect of race on identity	.564**	1.000	.297**
Identity salience	.228**	.297**	1.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

Cross-tabulation and chi-square tests of association were conducted to determine "Thought frequency" group differences based on the categorical variables of sex, generational status, and SES. A series of chi-square analyses indicated that the Thought frequency groups did not differ significantly on sex, $\chi^2(2, N = 312) = 2.38$, $p = .30$, generation status, $\chi^2(8, N = 312) = 15.01$, $p = .059$, or ethnicity $\chi^2(30, N = 312) = 31.74$, $p = .38$.

A series of chi-square analyses indicated that the "Effect of race" groups did not differ significantly in sex, $\chi^2(2, N = 294) = 1.18$, $p = .56$, generation status, $\chi^2(8, N = 294) = 4.66$, $p = .793$, or ethnicity $\chi^2(28, N = 294) = 25.84$, $p = .58$.

The "Identity salience" groups did not differ significantly in generation status, $\chi^2(8, N = 274) = 6.27$, $p = .61$, but did differ significantly in sex, $\chi^2(2, N = 274) = 11.35$, $p = .003$, and on ethnicity $\chi^2(28, N = 274) = 42.26$, $p = .041$.

Comparison of emergent themes with scale responses

As dictated by the research question #1, the aim of this analysis was to compare the groups formed by the three categorization schemes described above on relevant PCRIAS status scores. The following hypotheses were generated, as guided by the tenets of Helms's racial identity theory:

I. Conformity attitudes were expected to be significantly ***higher*** for groups that exhibited: low identification with being Asian American, low race salience, infrequent relevance/thinking about race.

II. Immersion-Emersion attitudes were expected to be ***lower*** in those very aforementioned groups (low identification with being Asian American, low race salience and infrequent thinking about race) and higher for groups that endorse: frequent relevance/ thinking about race, high race salience and high identification with being Asian American

III. Internalization attitudes were expected to be significantly different, at least between groups on the two outermost levels for each question (i.e., no effect vs. large effect of race upon how respondents think about themselves).

IV. Dissonance attitudes were expected to be ***higher*** for those individuals who think about race all of the time vs. those who never think about race; they should also be ***different*** for those who say that being Asian American has had no effect on the way they think of themselves.

A series of ANOVAs were conducted to compare the four PCRIAS scale scores of the participants across the three levels of "Thought frequency" (see Table 5). The results indicated significant differences only for Immersion-Emersion $F(2, 309) = 18.40$, $p < .001$. Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the three groups indicate that the Immersion-Emersion scores for "All the time" respondents were significantly higher than "Never/rarely" respondents, ($p<.001$).

Table 5

ANOVAs of Racial Identity Statuses Across "Thought Frequency" Levels

How often do you think about race?	all the time (every day, constantly, etc) or very often	occasionally or maybe once a week	never or rarely
# of respondents	176	40	96
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Conformity	1.78 (.53)	1.84 (.51)	1.94 (.54)
Dissonance	2.64 (.68)	2.60 (.87)	2.49 (.63)
Immersion-Emersion	2.68^{a} (.68)	2.46 (.57)	2.19^{b} (.59)
Internalization	4.21 (.60)	4.22 (.76)	4.37 (.35)

Means with different superscripts are significantly different (Tukey HSD).

A series of ANOVAs were conducted to examine group differences on the four PCRIAS scale scores of the participants, group according to "effect of race" (See Table 6). The results indicated significant differences in Conformity $F(2, 293) = 4.27$, $p<.01$ and Immersion-Emersion $F(2, 293) = 16.1$, $p<.001$ across the three levels of "Effect of race." To assess pairwise differences among the three levels for the main effect for conformity scores, the Tukey follow-up procedure was performed. The results indicated that Conformity scores for "Large effect" respondents were significantly lower than "No effect" respondents, ($p=.017$). In addition, Immersion-Emersion scores for "Large effect" respondents were significantly higher than both "Some effect" respondents ($p=.001$) and "No effect" respondents ($p<.001$).

Table 6

ANOVAs of Racial Identity Statuses Across "Effect of race" Levels

How has your experience of being Asian American shaped how you think of yourself?	Large effect	Some effect	No effect
# of respondents	180	74	40
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Conformity	1.78^{a} (.50)	1.89 (.58)	2.04^{b} (.54)
Dissonance	2.63 (.69)	2.58 (.73)	2.49 (.75)
Immersion-Emersion	2.68^{a} (.67)	2.36^{b} (.57)	2.13^{b} (.55)
Internalization	4.23 (.59)	4.34 (.39)	4.35 (.35)

Means with different superscripts are significantly different (Tukey HSD).

A series of ANOVAs were conducted to compare 4 PCRIAS scale scores of the participants, grouped according to whether race was a salient aspect of their identity. *No significant differences* were found between any of the three groups.

Table 7

ANOVAs of Racial Identity Statuses Across "Identity Salience" Levels

What is the most salient aspect of your identity?	Race only	Race/Ethnicity in addition to some other aspect(s)	Race not included at all
# of respondents	83	93	98
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Conformity	1.73 (.51)	1.82 (.48)	1.92 (.59)
Dissonance	2.52 (.70)	2.63 (.68)	2.60 (.74)
Immersion-Emersion	2.62 (.55)	2.58 (.84)	2.40 (.58)
Internalization	4.19 (.77)	4.22 (.58)	4.34 (.40)

Discussion of Mixed Methods Results

Results of the mixed methods analysis provide some tentative construct validity for Immersion-Emersion and Conformity, but for the most part, results cast much doubt upon the validity of Helms's operationalized scale for use with Asian Americans. Of the ten sub-hypotheses, only three were supported; indeed, Immersion-Emersion and Conformity were the only statuses that demonstrated any construct validity in the mixed methods analysis.

As predicted and consistent with Helms's racial identity theory, Conformity scores were significantly lower for the respondents who endorsed themes indicating that

being Asian American had a large effect on how they thought about themselves, compared to those who stated that being Asian American had no effect on how they thought about themselves. However, Conformity scores were not significantly different between the "Thought Frequency" groups. That is, those who said they thought about race all the time did not exhibit significantly different Conformity scores when compared to those who said they never thought about race. Additionally, Conformity scores were not significantly different between the "Identity Salience" groups.

Immersion-Emersion scores were significantly higher for respondents who reported thinking about race "all the time" as compared to respondents who reported "Never/rarely" thinking about race. In addition, participants who endorsed themes indicating that being Asian American had a "large effect" on how they thought of themselves scored significantly higher on Immersion-Emersion when compared to both "some effect" and "no effect" respondents. Given that Immersion-Emersion is characterized by a rigid over-identification with and withdrawal into one's own racial group, it follows that "large effect" respondents would score significantly higher on their Immersion-Emersion scores.

Notably, the "identity salience" groups exhibited no significant differences on any of the four PCRIAS scales. Surely we would expect significant differences on racial identity status scores between those indicating that race alone was the most salient aspect of their identity when compared to those who did not include race at all as a salient part of their identity. In addition, none of the Dissonance hypotheses were confirmed. It should be noted that with regard to general trends and non-significant differences, respondents *did* score as expected on Conformity, Dissonance, and Immersion-Emersion

(i.e., as predicted by the hypotheses). The most glaring exception to this trend involved the Internalization status scores. Internalization scores were not only non-significant; they were endorsed in the ***opposite*** way (non-significant trend only) expected as dictated by theory. That is, Internalization attitudes were ***highest*** for respondents that endorsed the ***least "mature"*** racial thinking (i.e., respondents who reported that being Asian American had "no effect" on their identity, that they "never/rarely" thought about race and that regarding the most salient aspects of their identity, "race not mentioned").

We are thus left with some perplexing results regarding the Internalization status, the purportedly most mature and most developed status of racial identity. These results provide further evidence for the assertion set forth by some researchers that this status might actually be a measure of political correctness, social desirability and/or color-blind political attitudes (Chen, et.al., 2006; Perry, et.al., 2009). Based on their recent investigation of the underlying factorial structure of the PCRIAS for Asian Americans and their finding that most Internalization scale items did not load onto *any* factor Perry, et.al. (2009) suggest: "Some items that presumably assess the construct of Internalization may need to be revised, or replaced with new items that accurately measure the domain of interest."

Qualitative analysis of emergent themes

Research Question #2: What are the significant themes that emerge from the qualitative data that yield theory-building information on Asian Americans and their psychological negotiation of race, racism and racial identity.

Qualitative analyses were used to examine themes of racial identity using a combination of the guidelines of Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and the matrices method of Miles and Huberman (1994). The data analytic strategies as well as the goals of the analysis were dictated by two research questions, both of which involved effective reduction of responses to the open-ended questions into smaller units of meaning. Qualitative data reduction entailed multiple reviews of the open-ended responses in order to reduce the text into matrices in order to identify emergent themes in the data. No themes were identified a priori; each of the responses was read and emergent themes were noted, regardless of whether they were related to racial identity.

For the first readings of the responses, copious notes were taken in the form of preliminary themes that would lead to the identification of patterns and trends wherein groups of individuals who endorsed similar racial identity attitudes could be identified and compared. Each participant's response was assigned a numerical code that corresponded to a theme, with the understanding that each response could be coded more than once, and, that emergent themes (and their respective codes) were often overlapping and not mutually exclusive. From here, a total of ten readings were conducted of the entire data set. With each subsequent reading, the themes from the prior reading were re-evaluated; some themes were combined under a higher-order theme, others were separated out into themes based on some distinctive feature. For example, initial readings yielded themes where respondents reported that being Asian American led to:

"feelings of insecurity due to being different," "having low self-esteem," "feeling less attractive," and "having an identity crisis." In subsequent readings, these four themes were combined as "experience of being Asian American linked to distress or conflict."

Qualitative analyses of responses to the three open-ended questions yielded a rich array of themes that provide important information about Asian Americans and their experiences with race. In general, emergent themes highlighted the multidimensional complexity of Asian American and their experiences with race. The most frequently endorsed emergent themes from the inferential qualitative analyses are listed in Table 8.

Table 8

Higher Order Emergent Themes

	Frequency endorsed
Distressing affect caused by race or being Asian American	111
Being Asian American has led to increased awareness	110
Race is externally imposed upon me by others' perception of me	96
Ethnic pride as a detour around the recognition of race	76
Confusion of race and ethnicity	76
Colorblind ideology / Model Minority Discourse	52
Being Asian American has had no effect on my identity	32
"Progressive" race-conscious political views	31

‘Distressing affect caused by race or being Asian American’

One of the most prevalent themes involved respondents’ endorsement of subjective experiences of distress related to race, racism or being Asian American. As previously mentioned, this higher-order theme included numerous sub-themes that all related to some experience of distress. Selected examples are included below (See Table 9 for additional examples).

- I am constantly being reminded that I am different (being Asian in a white dominated country). I don't know what I think of myself I feel that I don't belong anywhere.

- I think it always gives me some slight subconscious sense of being the other -- not being entitled to feeling that I belong or that I am at home in a situation unless people make an effort to welcome me solicit my opinion and involve me in what's going on. Then I can relax and feel ok.

- I lived in hawaii until I moved to Michigan for graduate school. That's when thoughts about race started to consume me. I'm really happy that I grew up in hawaii because it allowed me to become a person first without always thinking about my race. I love being Asian American. I would not want to be anything else. However since moving from Hawaii I've lived in places where Asians truly are a minority. In all honesty since moving to these homogenously caucasian places I've started to doubt myself more and have become more paranoid about how people treat me. It's not a very good feeling.

The prevalence of this theme is compelling evidence that race and racism are quite relevant for Asian Americans and moreover, that they have psychological and clinical correlates that warrant further scrutiny (Gee, et.al., 2007;; Yip, et.al.,, 2008). Distress was attributed to a range of issues, from the subtle attributional ambiguity about being turned down for a date to more blatant incidences of racial hate crimes. The distressing affect became manifest in a variety of experiences: having an ‘identity crisis,’ feeling paranoid, not belonging, feeling depressed, having low self-esteem, etc.

Table 9

Sample Responses of "Distressing affect caused by race or being Asian American"

Emergent theme	Sample Responses
Distress	people would think i am paranoia [sic] about the whole race issue...i mean i would like to not think of things in terms of race but society forces me to...a person of color will always think in certain situation(not gettin a job getting harassed going thru a building etc) whether or not their race was any reason why i was treated the way i was in those certain situations...
	sometimes i feel i suffer from low self-esteem because of my asian-am heritage having experienced the ridicule one receives in elementary school for having slanted eyes. And the constant assumption that i am mathematically and scientifically gifted (when i'm really not) has perpetuated that low self-image.
	To be honest there were times when I wished that I were Caucasion [sic] just so that life would be easier. Little things like the way I'm treated at a restaurant or at a store all bring me back to my racial background. There were many times when my friends and I would assume that we were treated badly because of our different skin tone.
	think I suffer from an identity problem because I was born in the US and my parents were not. I've never lived in a community with a significant Asian population. I've never been to their homeland to visit so I consider myself fully Americanized. The only thing that identifies me with being Asian American is how I look. (For example I can barely use chopsticks and I don't like rice or most Chinese food in general.)
	It has been painful, sometimes I think that I think too much about it.
	I have a feeling of 'otherness' that makes me very aware of how what I think or do is different from the norm. I usually try to adjust my behavior to my surroundings to 'fit in' better
	It surprised me to answer the way I did in some of the questions such as whether I feel inferior to white americans. I guess this is something I have felt or made to feel as I was growing up as a young immigrant when racial slurs and remarks by other children impacted how I felt about myself. Although intellectually I know all races are equal I don't feel it.

Racial identity is externally imposed

One particularly interesting and prevalent theme involved participants' accounts of how the significance of race in their lives became manifest only in the context of its external perception by others—whether through a racist experience or the awareness that one is seen as "different." That is, the development of respondents' racial identity stemmed predominantly from a social misrecognition—the imposition of a stereotype. In fact, respondents consistently noted how other aspects of their identity (e.g., career, religion, ethnicity, etc.) might actually hold more personal importance, but become overshadowed by the experiences of being racialized. These results replicate the findings and conclusions of other researchers (Chen, 2009). Note the following examples (See Table 10 for additional examples).

- Race is most salient because that's what people see right away. Even though I consider my religious background just as important as my racial background the former is more obvious when others see me.

- Race first- it is something that you are physically marked with that you cannot hide or change. Even if I didn't want race to be as salient others would always notice it first.

- That would be my skin color/physical appearance and the spelling of my name. These characteristics form the basis of how others treat and interact with me because I believe we still live in a very superficial society. I can act white brown or black but to others I'll always be Asian because the visual evidence of my yellow skin (or of the spelling of my name on an application form) is too obviously Asian for people especially strangers to ignore.

- Race is salient only in that that's what others will see first and any assumptions they have about Asians will then be attributed to me and I have become more aware of this phenomenon and how that affects me and my life.

- The most salient would be my racial identity with my religious affiliation coming really really close after. It's the most salient because that is the most common way people interact with me based off of what they see. People do not automatically assume or know my religion but they do know my race. They try to guess ethnicity but ultimately it boils down to race.

Table 10

Sample Responses for "Race is externally imposed"

Emergent theme	Sample Responses
Race is externally imposed	When non-Asians look at me they don't see an ethnicity. They see a race. I usually get asked Where are you from? What's your nationality? People ask this question automatically assuming that I'm not a U.S. citizen.
	Race has completely and totally shaped the way I think of myself. How can I escape my face which tells one and all I am Asian and exude Asian-ness just by my looks alone.
	Being asian american has shaped who I am. We are consently [sic]seen as being 'foreigners'. hate being asked 'where do you come from' or being told 'you speak such good english' being asian i look physically different...therefore i cannot 'blend' or 'pass' therefore i stand out.
	I think about my race more often than the other factors mentioned above; particularly the way others will always perceive me as being foreign merely b/c of my appearance. It doesn't matter that I grew up here & have no accent whatsoever; the fact is I look and will always look different.
	I would suppose my race to be the most salient aspect of my identity. Others notice that I'm not 100% asian and therefore that triggers conversation. When others take note of a particular aspect of you I think you tend to identify with that more often.
	I think about my race more often than the other factors mentioned above; particularly the way others will always perceive me as being foreign merely b/c of my appearance. It doesn't matter that I grew up here and have no accent whatsoever; the fact is I look and will always look different.
	Race is salient only in that that's what others will see first and any assumptions they have about Asians will then be attributed to me and I have become more aware of this phenomenon and how that affects me and my life. Personally the most salient aspect of my life is my sexual orientation and that was something I had to struggle with for such a long time that it has become almost instrumnetal [sic] in my development of self-identity self-esteem and other aspects of my life.

'Being Asian American has no impact on my identity'

Many respondents explicitly stated that race, or being Asian American had no effect on their sense of identity. Many of these participants offered short and matter-of-fact responses with little explanation offered. Others endorsed additional, more explanatory themes that will be discussed below. Selected examples are included below (See Table 11 for additional examples).

- Though I think about race moderately often I don't think I necessarily think of myself in terms of race so I would say that my being Asian American has not shaped my view of myself.
- not very often. I feel American not Asian American. I acknowledge that I'm Filipino however I don't identify myself as Filipino other than the way I appear to others. Inside I'm just me and I was raised in an American culture. I would identify myself as a creative personality feminine with a touch of tomboy in me
- I thought some of the questions about the way Whites treat Asians were pretty alarming. I've never really witnesses [sic] any bad treatment of Asians by Whites in real life. I wasn't sure how to answer those questions only because I was surprised they were even on the survey.

Ethnic pride as a detour around the recognition of racism

Another pervasive and important theme had to do with respondents expressing pride in their heritage/culture, but doing so in a way that may have offered a detour around the recognition of racial difference and/or racism. The overarching theme of this category was some juxtaposition of an endorsement of cultural pride with a minimization of racial difference or racism. Selected examples are included below (See Table 12 for additional examples).

- I feel proud of the cultural background that I have but I am also embarrassed about the ways that some modern Asians act. Often many of the mannerisms of Asians irritate me. I am irritated by the behaviors of both 'FOB' type Asians as well as 'rice boy/girl' type Asians. But regardless of how I feel about modern Asian culture and experience I am still most assuredly proud of the ancient culture and history of my people.

- I have grown up with White Americans mainly and date white men. It is not an issue to me. I think I still am somehow trying to be a white girl. But I 'm proud not to be the average white girl but I get special attention because I am Asian and proud of that.

- I appreciate my background as I appreciate my family and the experiences that I have gained because of my ethnicity. I do not feel it makes me different. Everyone has there own experiences and culture; mine involves being of Indian decent [sic].

- I have not had a problem with being Asian American. Of course racism is around me but I don't let it get to me. I have not been significantly affected by racism. However I have gained confidence and am very proud to be chinese.

'Color-blind' racial attitudes and 'model minority' status endorsements

Another significant emergent theme involved respondents endorsing some sort of "colorblind" racial ideology or espousing some tenet of the "Model Minority" discourse, again, as a way of sidestepping the recognition of racial inequality and racial difference.

- Not very often. I don't feel that I have been hurt or oppressed as a result of my race any more than other people of different races. So it's not something I find exceptionally important to think about I feel that since I am different from the majority I might as well make the perception of that difference a positive one. There is a slight sense of family 'honor' to uphold which I have carried into school and work.

- I know that there is racism in this world... But i don't buy it. I think soon our love for money will break the hate we have for other races. I've grown comfortable with my race and believe me it took some time to accept that I'm chinese. I have went thru a stage of hating all other groups than asian now i don't. I have other things to worry about than race. As time is moving forward, i hope so are we.

- I feel that everyone no matter what race they are have their share of historical hardships. I feel that some extremists overplay their hardships and as a result gets the media attention. I feel that because of this many people are misinformed and think too generally.

- though I heard about racial discrimination often but i never encounter it. though my complexion is different with white but i have no difficult [sic] to get involve with white activities. i think no matter what race you belong to there is always something good of your race and we all need to try to learn and keep it. i think you are benefit with who you are no matter which race you belong to or even the language you speak.

Table 11

Sample Responses for “Being Asian American has had no impact on my identity”

Emergent theme	Sample Responses
Being Asian American has no impact on my identity	I really don't have a profound experience of being Asian American. I know so many people of different backgrounds that I was not very aware of being Asian. I'm sure that my being Asian has influenced some of my decisions but I don't define myself as Asian.
	honestly i don't think it has altered how I think of myself at all... is more what I do that makes me think of who I am...
	I don’t think of myself as different.
	I have different beliefs but still the some of the same ones as other Americans. However many people find it fascinating that I am from Asian descent. But I do not know much about my culture.
	i consider myself to being just another human being on the earth trying to make it. u dumb f#@k.
	My personality...most of the time when I interact with people I don't think of them or even myself by race or ethnicity. I don't say Ooo she's Asian or he's Armenian or she's Italian... It's usually personality that first really matters to me.
	I feel it's my personality. Like I stated before a person is who he or she is regardless of race. Nothing relating to my race ethnicity gender class etc. affects how I feel about myself and how others should feel about me.
	I have grown up with White Americans mainly and date white men. It is not an issue to me.

Table 12

Sample Responses for “Ethnic pride as a detour around recognition of racism”

Emergent theme	Sample Responses
Ethnic pride as detour	I don't really think any differently of myself. But take pride in Asian heritage.
	I feel that since I am different from the majority I might as well make the perception of that difference a positive one. There is a slight sense of family 'honor' to uphold which I have carried into school and work.
	I really have a lot of pride in my culture having grown up in a family rich with cultural traditions and had parents who gave me great self-esteem. Though I grew up in a predominantly white middle class suburb I rarely felt shame in my culture or being Asian American.
	I love myself because I have been able to incorporate what I like about the American culture and what I respect about the Chinese culture. I have experience minor stereotpyes [sic] and discrimination but not have been affected by it.
	I like the fact that I can trace my ancestry directly to another continent and culture that I am familiar with. I never really consider myself an outsider though I tend to go out of my way to avoid contact with others at times. People often refer to me as being Americanized since I am not too much into Indian culture/language.
	I feel blessed to be part of a culture that has rich traditions although sometimes I feel like an outsider amongst white people
	Being multicultural is a source of strength in spite of how others may choose to view and treat me in a negative way. It is an asset because I am able to see things from different perspectives and to experience rich cultural events.

Table 13

Sample Responses for "'Color Blind' racial attitudes or 'model minority' discourse"

Emergent theme	Sample Responses
'Color Blind' racial attitudes or 'model minority' discourse	I never thought of being Asian as that different from being White until I got to college. I still don't think there is as huge a difference between whites and Asians as there is between whites and African Americans. I didn't like how there was such a divide between whites and Asians. I thought that some of the racism questions were blown out of proportion.
	I belive [sic] in the US most people can make an OK living if they try regardless of their race and other identities. The class of profession you are identified with is therefore more important.
	Anyone is willing to work hard in USA you can achieve whatever your dreams/goals are.
	I don't think of myself as different. I noticed that most of my Asian friends seem to only want to befriend another Asian. It somewhat bothers me. I think that since we're in America we should at least try to learn the American culture and do things the American way-and we have the advantage to keep up our own culture as well.
	Many of the questions are ridiculous. Like do you have white values. To me I don't know how to answer that because i believe there is no such thing as white or asian or black values.
	From personal experiences and observations as long as you've got money people don't treat you any differently. Discrepancies are more obvious with people of lower SES status.
	I am proud to be an american and feel too many asians speak too loudly about being asian. It is all an issue of respect for all human beings. In addition, I think it is not necessarily whites that are the most racist. I have met many asians and blacks who are more racist than anyone I know.
	Most of my thoughts about race/racism only involve black friends or black people in general.

Discussion of emergent themes

The rich themes that emerged from the three open-ended questions in this study highlight the importance and complexity of race in the lives of Asian Americans. Contrary to the trend of focusing on ethnicity and culture in psychological research on Asian Americans, the results of this study provide compelling and powerful evidence that ***race*** indeed matters in important ways for Asian Americans.

One of the most interesting findings of the qualitative analysis involved the preponderance of responses that described how race, or being "Asian American," was experienced as an externally imposed category or stereotype that, regardless of its intrinsic relevance, became significant by virtue of its imposition. In other words, respondents repeatedly noted that regardless of the "accuracy" of race, or the personal meaningfulness of "Asian" as a racial category, the experience of being perceived as Asian was repeated and significant enough to make the racial category a significant aspect of their identity. Respondents noted how other aspects of their identity (e.g., sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, etc.) might actually hold more personal importance, but become overshadowed by the experiences of being racialized and perceived as a racial 'other.' This emergent theme highlights the uneasy and complex relationship between self-defined identity and social ascriptions of identity. That respondents repeatedly endorsed the notion that the process of ***being perceived*** as a racialized other impacted how they thought of themselves, regardless of any intrinsic choice to identify with an Asian American collective, dictates that any attempt to theorize a psychological model of Asian American racial identity must grapple with these complexities.

Another significant finding was that approximately one-third of respondents spontaneously offered responses that contained themes of psychological distress related to the experience of race, racism, or "being Asian American." Respondents attributed racial distress to subtle and blatant experiences of racism, as well as a range of phenomena such as 'identity crisis,' paranoia, feelings of not belonging, and low self-esteem due to bullying. These findings provide further evidence that debunks the model minority myth assertion that Asian Americans do not experience racism, or that they are unaffected by racism. This study adds to the body of evidence documenting the deleterious effects of racism on Asian Americans (Gee, et.al., 2007; Sue, Bucceri, et.al., & Yip, et.al., 2008). However, as a clue to the paradoxical nature of race and racism, the next set of emergent themes are all ways Asian Americans minimize the effect of race and racism in their lives.

The confusion between, or conflation of, "ethnicity" and "race" noted in the review of the research literature, actually emerged as a pervasive theme in participants' responses as well. Whereas each of the three open-ended questions inquired about 'race' or being 'Asian American,' many participants responded as though they were being asked about culture or ethnicity, thereby sidestepping any elaboration of the racial dimensions of their experiences. Results indicate that Asian Americans utilize an additional range of specific strategies for minimizing racism; emergent themes included endorsement of 'color-blind' racial attitudes and model minority myth ideologies, invoking ethnic-specific and cultural pride, and minimizing the relevance of race for their identities altogether. Each of these themes involves some sort of detour around the recognition of race and racism.

In the following excerpt, a study participant amply demonstrates the complicated tensions inherent in her attempts to resuscitate/salvage a model minority from the wreckage of numerous blatant experiences of racism and denigration.

> 1. During the SE Asian conflict when my white husband was drafed [sic] into the US Army & was in basic training in No. Carolina I visited him one weekend. While at a restaurant a white man came over and asked him Where did you get that gook son? In 'Nam?
> 2.Having traveled a lot on my own and dining alone I have had several instances when I was not shown a table ignored sent to sit at the bar to wait endlessly while persons who arrived long after me were seated & served.
> 3. I have had experiences early in my adult life when white men have wondered if I were built sidewise [sic] or if I were a prostitute...both are rumors & myths perpetuated by servicemen who had spent time in the orient.

Having listed the previous examples of how gender and race interact in her life, she went on to offer the following response to a question soliciting general feedback about the survey:

> The survey does not take into account Asian Americans who spent most of their lives in white society due to circumstances: For instance after our arrival in the US my family lived in a small city in Pennsyvania [sic] where we were the ONLY Asians (i.e. Chinese) in the county for over 20 years. Our contact with Asians was very limited. In this background we were treated with a great deal of awe respect curiosity special opportunities (positive because I and my siblings were high achievers academically in sports in music art etc.). Half a century later the community still remembers our family with a great deal of fondness.

This is a clear example of how the model minority myth is invoked in order to minimize and ameliorate the injury of racism. "Awe" and "curiosity" are referenced as positive regard and the "high achievement" dimension of the model minority myth is wholeheartedly embraced, yet the efficacy to attenuate the effects of racism remains unclear. The results of the current study highlight the psychological significance of race for Asian Americans, but moreover, the heterogeneity and complexity of the findings dictates the need for racial identity theorizing to understand these complex experiences.

Chapter V: General Discussion and Conclusions

> With black and white as the dominant racial categories, historical memory tends to overlook the fierce contestations over the shades, as it were, in between.
>
> Anne Cheng, 2001, p. 22

> Stereotypes of Asian Americans are no longer simply the seductive images of the Orient rendered for consumption by white audiences. Instead, they have become woven into the complex fantasies Asian Americans have about identity, community and gender.
>
> Jacqueline Lee, 1997, p. 90

In this chapter, the study results and key findings from both research questions are summarized. The applicability and relevance of Helms's operationalized model of racial identity for Asian Americans are interrogated. Additionally, limitations of the current study and directions for future research are discussed. Finally, counseling implications are discussed based on the findings of the study.

In an important article on ethnic and racial identity research, Cokley (2007) has written:

> When researchers are interested in how individuals see themselves relative to their cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors, ethnic identity is the more appropriate construct to study. However, when researchers are more interested in how individuals construct their identities in response to an oppressive and highly racialized society, racial identity is the more appropriate construct to study.

He continues by noting "a disproportionate number of ethnic identity studies have been conducted with Asian Americans" and that indeed, a trend has developed wherein researchers do not even associate Asian Americans with the study of racial identity (Cokley, 2007). The resulting implication is clear: given the preponderance of ethnic identity research for Asian Americans, either researchers are confusing ethnic identity and racial identity, or they must not be interested in how Asian Americans "construct their identities in response to an oppressive and highly racialized society" (Cokley, 2007).

Contrary to this conventional wisdom that ethnic identity is more relevant than racial identity for Asian Americans, the results of the current study indicate that race is very much salient in the lives and identities of Asian Americans and warrants further investigation. Significantly, the results of this study draw attention to the importance of *race*-specific experiences for Asian Americans and serve as an exhortation to further research and scrutiny. Further, results demonstrate that Asian Americans experience race in complicated, uneven and widely variegated ways that accentuate the within-group heterogeneity of Asian Americans' racial experiences. A nuanced, sophisticated and cohesive theorization of Asian American *racial* identity is needed to understand these complicated experiences.

The PCRIAS and Asian Americans

In addition to the rich and meaningful themes that emerged from qualitative analysis, this dissertation is the first mixed methodological investigation of the construct validity of Janet Helms's People of Color Racial Identity Attitudes Scale for Asian Americans. The study produced mixed results with regard to the construct validity of the PCRIAS for Asian Americans. As individually conceived theoretical constructs (i.e., taken out of the context of Helms's developmental trajectory), the Conformity and Immersion-Emersion statuses were partially corroborated by the qualitative data and results provide tentative construct validity for these statuses of Helms's model. As predicted, and consistent with Helms's racial identity theory, Conformity scores were significantly lower for the respondents who endorsed themes indicating that being Asian American had a large effect on how they thought about themselves, compared to those who stated that being Asian American had no effect on how they thought about

themselves. Immersion-Emersion scores were significantly higher for respondents who reported thinking about race "all the time" as compared to respondents who reported "Never/rarely" thinking about race. In addition, participants who endorsed themes indicating that being Asian American had a "large effect" on how they thought of themselves scored significantly higher on Immersion-Emersion when compared to both "some effect" and "no effect" respondents. Given that Immersion-Emersion is characterized by a rigid over-identification with and withdrawal into one's own racial group, it follows that "large effect" respondents would score significantly higher on their Immersion-Emersion scores.

However, respondents who noted that race alone was the most salient aspect of their identity did not score differently on any of the PCRIAS statuses when compared to those who did not include race at all as a salient part of their identity. In addition, none of the Dissonance hypotheses were supported. That is, respondents who endorsed very different ideas about racial identity often did not score differently on the PCRIAS.

The Internalization status, purportedly the most mature and developed of all racial identity statuses, yielded non-significant results that, interestingly, were opposite to what racial identity theory would predict. For example, Internalization attitudes were highest for respondents that endorsed the least "mature" racial thinking (i.e., respondents who reported that being Asian American had "no effect" on their identity, that they "never/rarely" thought about race and that regarding the most salient aspects of their identity, "race not mentioned"). Thus, the construct of Internalization, as well as its operationalization, must seriously be called into question, as has been suggested by other researchers (Perry, et.al, 2010). Results of the current study may provide the most

conclusive empirical evidence thus far that this status is simply not applicable nor relevant for any conceptualization of racial identity for Asian Americans. In addition, mixed methods analyses highlight the inability of the PCRIAS to differentiate between Asian Americans that endorse widely divergent qualitative themes indicative of different racial identity attitudes. As such, results of this study cast much doubt upon the applicability of PCRIAS scale for Asian Americans as well as the conceptualization of the developmental trajectory of racial identity theory.

The PCRIAS was primarily an operationalization of William Cross's Nigrescence Theory (Cross, 1971), which outlined the stages of Black racial consciousness development. In an effort to recognize commonalities between racialized groups in the U.S., Helms (1995) argued that her racial identity attitudes measure would generalize to all racialized persons of color "to the extent that the other groups have been socialized under similar conditions of cross-generational racial oppression, and the measure purports to assess intrapsychic reactions to such oppression." Due to their unique and diverse histories of racialization, as well as their different contemporary position in U.S. racial dynamics, Asian Americans pose significant challenges to Helms's assumptions about the generalizability of her model to all people of color. Qualitative analysis generated critical theoretical points that illuminate how, compared to African Americans, the historical, political, and economic differences of Asian Americans have led to different options for the management of racial stimuli, and therefore, warrant a re-theorization of racial identity development that takes these particularities into account and recognizes their theoretical importance.

Toward a theory of Asian American racial identity

In considering the broad gestalt of the theoretical points that emerged from the qualitative analysis, a key tension emerges. On one hand, a sizeable number (n=111) of respondents reported distress that they attributed to racial experiences and another large number of respondents (n=99) endorsed the notion that the process of ***being perceived*** as a racialized 'other' impacted how they thought of themselves, regardless of any intrinsic choice to identify with an Asian American collective. On the other hand, a broad array of themes emerged illuminating Asian Americans' strategies for ***minimizing*** the effect of race and racism in their lives. Janet Helms has written "If one is a member of [a] less empowered group, then one's primary racial identity issue is to overcome the internalized negative stereotyping associated with membership in such groups in order to avoid permanent psychic wounding and to form curative bonds with one's own group members" (Helms, 1996, p. 160). Any model of Asian American racial identity must recognize the *competing demands* between the need to validate experiences of racism through a collective identity and the need (and availability of options) to minimize racism due to their "discursive proximity" to Whites.

Helms's racial identity theory utilizes a developmental framework that asserts that individuals who exhibit high levels of "less developed" identity attitudes (e.g., Conformity) are more likely to internalize negative messages about their racial group, with the result being a compromise in self-esteem and well being (Helms & Cook, 1999). On the other hand, individuals who have high levels of the "more developed" racial identity worldviews such as Internalization are more aware of the effects of racism, and

consequently, are better able to cope with the deleterious effects of racism because they have more cognitive resources available.

Given the historical context of the overt racism, violence and subjugation experienced by African Americans and the resultant polarization with White European-Americans, Helms may rightly assume that when African Americans minimize racism or deny the importance of race to their identity, there may likely be a maladaptive psychological process occurring. Yet I argue that because Asian Americans are not unilaterally polarized from the White majority discursively, the consequences may be very different (though certainly not absent) for 1.) distancing oneself from awareness of racism and 2.) denying the importance of race to one's identity and sense of self.

Much of the current research efforts involving racial identity contains a psycho-diagnostic imperative that seeks to map the protective effects of a strong racial identity or the mental health correlates and consequences of certain types of racial identity attitudes (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010). Yet what eludes current efforts is a complex understanding of the shifting dynamics that are in play that complicate any linear conceptualization of this process. The results of the current study force us to contend with the fact that Asian Americans have access to racial discourses such as the model minority myth, a "positive" racial stereotype that Asian Americans themselves may endorse as a means of minimizing racism and racial oppression. Emergent themes also indicated that Asian Americans have recourse to ethnic pride or other "multicultural" niceties that serve as possible detours around the incorporation of "race" into their identities.

In a recent book chapter that cites her research on Asian American racial identity, Chen (2009) reiterates the idea that the model minority myth pits Asian Americans

against other racialized minority groups by encouraging them to strive toward becoming as close to the White ideal as possible. It is thus that, on the surface, it may be tempting for Asian Americans to minimize racial discrimination because they are rewarded for not identifying as being part of an oppressed group (Ancheta, 1998).

This is not to say that these detours and strategies are not psychologically significant, nor that they are robust or stable coping mechanisms, just that the complexity of race for Asian Americans disrupts any obvious association between racial identity attitudes and mental health outcomes. Indeed, to reiterate, the most prevalent theme in participant responses was an endorsement of distress related to race, racism or being Asian American. In other words, the minimization of racial difference does not necessarily result in the absence of psychological distress. In addition, I would argue that despite the lures and rewards offered by the model minority myth, the internalization of any stereotype, even a "positive" one, is still limiting and flattens an individual's ability to experience a full range of possibilities.

For example, many respondents indicated that they never or rarely think about race; another set of respondents endorsed the idea that being Asian American has had no effect on their identity. According to Janet Helms's racial identity theory, one possible explanation would be that these individuals are in a state of denial, possibly self-hatred. While this may very well true in many cases, this dissertation complicates any linear formulations and offers more nuanced possibilities. As I have suggested, a key issue to be avoided in any theory of Asian American racial identity is this normative developmental trajectory that seeks to map out the mental health correlates of certain racial identity worldviews. This, of course, does not imply a relativism that ignores the

fact that there are clearly maladaptive ways of interpreting race and racism, but rather, that the spectrum between adaptive coping and maladaptive internalization is neither linear nor tidy. While the developmental task of forming a "healthy" racial identity seems compelling, the case of Asian Americans is complicated by vastly different tensions, discursive options, and historical contexts. The historical polarization between Blacks and Whites undergirded the Nigrescence process for African Americans (Cross, 1971; Cross & Vandiver, 2001) and consequently, was a theoretical anchor for Helms's Racial Identity Model and PCRIAS (Helms, 1990). I argue that there is no equivalent process for Asian Americans; given their position in U.S. racial discourse, discursive polarization between Asian Americans and Whites is more complicated and ambivalent. Sellers et.al., (1998) have written:

> Although the issues of assimilation and nationalism are relevant to other groups, there is a qualitative difference in the historical significance that these various philosophies have for different ethnic groups. For instance, there may be less tension around issues of assimilation for those ethnic groups who have migrated to the US looking for a better life as opposed to those who had American culture forced upon them. Also, there may be group differences in the way that various ideologies are interrelated for various groups."

That said, it appears that the multidimensional conceptualization of identity domains suggested by Sellers offers a more suitable model for Asian Americans. Their conceptual framework obviates any developmental imperative, and instead, purports to identify and assess clearly operationalized orthogonal domains of racial identity (Sellers et.al., 1998). In particular, the Multidimensional Model of Racial Identity (MMRI) is comprised of four dimensions: salience, centrality, ideology, and regard. Sellers has noted the possible generalizeability of his model and has written "The structure and process of group identity may be similar across groups." But he is rightly cautions: "The four ideologies

delineated are based specifically on our extensive study of the unique cultural and historical experiences of African Americans. Data generated by the current study suggest that his four dimensions may be good starting points for generating a model and theory of Asian American racial identity. Despite its merits, this model falls short in that it fails to grapple with the central tension in Asian American racial identity development: the dialectic between the need to validate experiences of racism through a collective identity and the need to minimize racism due to their "discursive proximity" to Whites.

Limitations of the Current Study

The current study, by explicitly targeting an exclusively Asian American sample, and by including race-related surveys, participants were primed to think about race when responding to the open-ended questions. By answering questions so focused on race, respondents may have been more likely to answer "race" when asked: "What is the most salient aspect of your identity?"

Due to the nature of the research topic—racial identity—the decision was made to only include participants who identified as Asian American. In retrospect, this inclusion criterion may have inadvertently excluded some individuals of Asian descent and thus, *a priori*, biased the sample toward individuals with an Asian American identification. These excluded individuals, from a demographic/census standpoint, may have been Asian American, but were not included in the study, a regrettable limitation due to the fact that their responses may have provided valuable information about the continuum of racial experiences of Asian Americans. It is interesting to note, however, that despite this limitation, even those participants who identified as Asian American generated responses wherein the effect of being Asian American on their identity was minimized or denied.

Another limitation of the current study is the uneven representation of numerous demographic variables, including sex, SES and Asian ethnic groups. In particular, given that Filipinos and Indian American are among the most populous Asian ethnic groups in the U.S., they were underrepresented in the current sample.

With regard to recruitment, the study sample may have been biased and limited by the fact that many participants were contacted via emails and online list-servs that were sent to Asian/Asian American organizations. Nevertheless, the sample was quite heterogeneous with regard to racial attitudes and identifications. A more ideal recruitment would have reached Asian Americans that had no affiliations to Asian American organizations. As mentioned above, the Internet was utilized to recruit participants, thus limiting the sample to individuals with technological knowledge and access to computers. As such, we can expect that the sample was accordingly limited by SES and level of education. It should be noted, though, that on-line distribution of the questionnaire broadened the traditional university student sample used in psychological research to include a diverse range of ages and geographic locations.

With regard to analysis, the current study focused on the racial aspects of the open-ended responses, sometimes at the expense of a more careful consideration of data relating to intersecting social identities such as gender, sexual orientation and religion.

Directions for Future Research

Future research should utilize focus groups, in-depth interviews and other qualitative methods and analyses that would identify dimensions and particularities of racial identity specific to Asian Americans. A central task of this endeavor will be to further distinguish the overlapping and parallel processes of ethnic and racial identity

development. One theme that emerged in oblique ways was related to dating and sexual experiences. Race seems to be key factor in these experiences and warrants further attention. (Lee, LePhuoc, & Chen, 2000). It is only from this point that efforts at scale construction should take place. Further theorizing should take care to broaden or disrupt the current psycho-diagnostic imperative to distinguish between "healthy" and "pathological" ways of managing racial stimuli. Scholars have advocated a perspective that favors a "constructed" self that considers the influence of past experiences and current social context on identity development over the "essentialist" notion of the self inherent in existing developmental stage models (Uba, 2002; Yi & Shorter-Gooden, 1999).

Clinical Implications and Conclusion

The current study tested the construct validity of a widely used measure of racial identity attitudes that was developed for African Americans but was generalized to include all People of Color. The results of this study provided some limited empirical evidence supporting some aspects of the PCRIAS, but seriously call into question the applicability of the overall model. We are left to conclude that the theoretical foundation and operationalized model Helms's PCRIAS are unsalvageable for Asian Americans. In addition, emergent themes highlighted some historical and political particularities about the Asian American experience that figure largely into any conceptualization of Asian American racial identity development.

These findings bring to light several important factors that clinicians should consider when working with Asian Americans. First, the findings emphasize the relevance and importance of race in the lives of Asian Americans. This reiterates the

suggestion that therapists should be attuned to racial identity in clinical settings (Helms & Cook, 1999) and these factors should figure in their case conceptualizations and treatment strategies with Asian Americans. Clinicians would then be better equipped to help clients negotiate both internal and external negative messages about their racial group.

The fact that distress was so highly endorsed should draw our attention to the deleterious effects of living in a racist world (Sue, et.al., 2007), even as we understand the complex socio-political dynamics that reward Asian Americans for downplaying their oppressed status. The rich responses generated by these three simple questions underscore the importance of gathering similar information, not just in research, but in clinical encounter as well.

Results of the current study underscore how mixed methods approaches provide valuable strategies for investigating the complexities of Asian American racial identity. Moreover, the high qualitative response rate indicates that participants were interested in expressing their thoughts and opinions in a format that was unrestricted by questions and Likert-type choices. As a result, this study yielded important theory-building data that has eluded strictly quantitative investigations.

Asian Americans are situated in an ambivalent position in U.S. racial discourse. Despite the fact that the racial category "Asian" is a census convenience, a curious biological and anthropological fiction, the data presented in this study provide clear evidence that race is quite real for Asian Americans and merits closer scrutiny in psychological research. We must reexamine the tacit misunderstanding that using racial language and racial categories can only serve to reify erroneous generalities and

stereotypes. Regardless of the "accuracy" or "truth" of race for Asian Americans, it is clearly a significant and impactful issue when it comes to how Asian Americans construct their identities.

APPENDIX A

Intro Pages to Online Survey

STUDY OF ASIAN AMERICANS' EXPERIENCES, ATTITUDES, AND BELIEFS

Intro Page

Welcome to the STUDY OF ASIAN AMERICANS' EXPERIENCES, ATTITUDES, AND BELIEFS!

This study will take about 15-20 minutes for you to complete.

Your participation will make you eligible to win one of two $25 gift certificates for an on-line bookstore.

Please review the following pages of the consent form to decide if you would like to participate.

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

IRB# 2002-04-0101

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

TITLE OF RESEARCH STUDY:

Study of Asian Americans' Experiences, Attitudes, and Perceptions

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS and Telephone Number:

Grace A. Chen, Paul LePhuoc, Michele Guzmán, Ph.D., and Stephanie Rude, Ph.D.
(512) 471-4409

Funding source: Not applicable.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to examine Asian Americans' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about race-related issues. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have indicated that you consider yourself to be Asian American. The anticipated number of participants is 200.

What will be done if you take part in this research study?

This study consists of filling out several questionnaires and will take about 15-20 minutes to answer. The questionnaires ask about experiences, attitudes, and beliefs about issues related to race and ethnicity and are not difficult to answer. There are no right or wrong answers.

What are the possible discomforts and risks?

The questions in the study may elicit minor psychological discomfort because the questions might lead you to think about some issues you have not thought about before. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, you may withdraw from the study without penalty. If you wish to discuss the information above or any other risks you may experience, you may call one of the Principal Investigators listed on this form. Should you feel any

discomfort as a result of participating in this study, please contact the researchers for a list of counseling resources.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others?

By participating in this study, you will be helping add to the research in psychology on Asian Americans, a group that is often overlooked in studies. You may also learn something
new about yourself and the way you think about these issues.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything?
If you choose to participate in this study, it will take about 15-20 minutes of your time.

Will you receive compensation for your participation in this study?

As a participant in this study, you are eligible to win one of two GIFT CERTIFICATES ($25 for an on-line bookstore) when you send a separate e-mail to the researchers at APAresearch@yahoo.com. This e-mail will not be linked to your responses in any way.

What if you are injured because of the study?
There is no foreseen physical risk as a result of participating in this study.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with The University of Texas at Austin.

How can you withdraw from this research study?

You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits for which you may be entitled by clicking on the "EXIT THIS SURVEY" option in the upper right corner of the screen. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Clarke A. Burnham, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 512/232-4383.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected?

Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin and the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored then the sponsor also has the legal right to review your research records.

Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

If the results of this research are published or presented at scientific meetings, your identity will not be disclosed.

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?

The researchers will benefit from your participation in this study in that we will gain a better understanding of Asian Americans regarding their psychological experiences, perceptions, and attitudes related to race and ethnicity. The researchers also may use data gathered from this study to help them develop future dissertation research projects.

You must be 18 years of age or older and identify yourself as Asian American before you may proceed.

By clicking on "NEXT," you are verifying that you are at least 18 years of age and that you are Asian American. You are also agreeing to participate voluntarily as stated in the previous informed consent page.

If you are not at least 18 years of age or are not Asian American, please exit this survey now by clicking on "EXIT THIS SURVEY" in the upper right corner of the page.

1. Do you identify yourself as Asian American?
   ☐ yes ☐ no

2. Are you 18 years old or older?
   ☐ yes ☐ no

APPENDIX C

(PCRIAS)

Instructions: This questionnaire is designed to measure people's social and political attitudes concerning race and ethnicity. Different people have different opinions so there are no right or wrong answers. Use the scale below to respond to each statement according to the way you see things. Be as honest as you can.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. In general, I believe that Whites are superior to other racial groups.

2. I feel more comfortable being around Whites than I do being around Asian Americans.

3. In general, Asian Americans have not contributed much to American society.

4. Sometimes, I am embarrassed to be Asian.

5. I would have accomplished more in life if I had been born White.

6. Whites are more attractive than Asian Americans.

7. Asian Americans should learn to think and act like Whites.

8. I limit myself to White activities.

9. I think Asians blame Whites too much for their problems.

10. I feel unable to involve myself in White experiences and am increasing my involvement in experiences involving Asian Americans.

11. When I think about how Whites have treated Asian Americans, I feel an overwhelming anger.

12. I want to know more about my culture.

13. I limit myself to activities involving Asian Americans.

14. Most Whites are untrustworthy.

15. American society would be better off if it were based on the cultural values of Asian Americans.

16. I am determined to find my racial identity.

17. Most Whites are insensitive.

18. I reject all White values.

19. My most important goal in life is to fight the oppression of Asian Americans.

20. I believe that being Asian has caused me to have many strengths.

21. I am comfortable wherever I am.

22. People, regardless of their race, have strengths and limitations.

23. I think Asian and White culture differ from each other in some ways, but neither group is superior.

24. My Asian cultural background is a source of pride to me.

25. People of Asian culture and White culture have much to learn from each other.

26. Whites have some customs that I enjoy.

27. I enjoy being around people regardless of their race.

28. Every racial group has some good people and some bad people.

29. Asian Americans should not blame Whites for all of their problems.

30. I do not understand why Whites treat Asian Americans as they do.

31. I am embarrassed about some of the things I feel about Asians.

32. I am not sure where I really belong.

33. I have begun to question my beliefs.

34. Maybe I can learn something from people of my own race.

35. White people can teach me more about surviving in this world, but Asian Americans can teach me more about being human.

36. I don't know whether being Asian is an asset or a deficit.

37. Sometimes I think Whites are superior and sometimes I think they're inferior to Asian Americans.

38. Sometimes I am proud to be Asian and sometimes I am ashamed of it.

39. Thinking about my values and beliefs takes up a lot of my time.

40. I'm not sure how I feel about myself.

41. White people are difficult to understand.

42. I find myself replacing old friends with new ones who are Asian.

43. I feel anxious about some of the things I feel about Asians.

44. When an Asian American does something embarrassing in public, I feel embarrassed.

45. When both White people and Asian Americans are present in a social situation, I prefer to be with Asian Americans.

46. My values and beliefs match those of Whites more than Asian Americans.

47. The way Whites treat Asian Americans makes me angry.

48. I only follow the traditions and customs of Asian Americans.

49. When Asian Americans act like Whites I feel angry.

50. I am comfortable being the race I am.

APPENDIX D

Demographics

1. Sex: ☐ female ☐ male

2. Age: ____

3. Ethnic background:_____
(e.g., Burmese, Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, etc.):

4. Socioeconomic Status
☐ Working Class
☐ Lower-Middle Class
☐ Middle-Middle Class
☐ Upper-Middle Class
☐ Upper Class

5. What percentage of your last school/work environment consisted of people of your ethnicity? (check one)
☐0-5%
☐6-10%
☐11-25%
☐26-50%
☐over 50% (please specify)_____

6. Generation status
☐I was born in the U.S. My parents were also born in the U.S.
☐I was born in the U.S., but at least one of my parents was not.
☐I have lived in the U.S. since I was 10 years old or younger.
☐I moved to the U.S. after the age of 10.
☐Other (please specify)_____

APPENDIX E

Debriefing Page

You are now finished with the survey! Thank you for participating in our study.

This letter is intended to provide you with a basic explanation of our study and the value of your participation. Our study is an investigation of Asian American identity. Basically, we are interested in the different factors that contribute to how Asian Americans experience themselves, especially in the context of being different from the White majority in America. In addition, we wanted to understand better how Asian Americans differ from each other in this regard. Psychologists use this information to develop theories about the manner in which Asian Americans adapt and cope with their experiences. The results of this study will also help develop appropriate ways of working with Asian Americans who seek psychological treatment.

We would be happy to discuss any further questions and/or reactions that you might have about our study.

Should you feel any discomfort as a result of participating in this study and wish to speak to a trained counselor, please contact the researchers, Grace A. Chen or Paul LePhuoc at (512) 471-4409 for a list of counseling resources.

In addition, if you would like a copy of the results of our study, please contact one of us at the email address or phone number below. Thanks again for your time and effort.

Sincerely,
Grace Chen, M.A., & Paul LePhuoc, M.A.
APAresearch@yahoo.com
Doctoral Students in Counseling Psychology
University of Texas at Austin
(512) 471-4409

-*-

As a participant in this study, you are eligible to win one of two GIFT CERTIFICATES ($25 for an on-line bookstore) when you send a separate e-mail to the researchers at APAresearch@yahoo.com.
This e-mail will not be linked to your responses in any way.

Appendix F - Participants

	Overall sample	**Qualitative sample**	**Excluded non-responders**
Sample size	n=343	n=314	n=24
Average age	27.4	26.9	28.33
Age range	18-68	18-68	19-44
Sex	230 females	215 females	15 females
	113 males	99 males	14 males
Socioeconomic status			
Working class	23	22	1
Lower Middle	40	38	2
Middle Middle	156	145	12
Upper Middle	116	102	14
Upper	7	7	-
Ethnicity			
Mixed-Asian ethnicity	8	8	-
Mixed-race	16	15	1
Bangladeshi	2	2	-
Burmese	1	1	-
Cambodian	2	2	-
Chinese	118	102	16
Filipina/o	36	35	1
Hmong	2	2	-
Indian	19	19	-
Japanese	30	29	1
Korean	36	34	2
Laotian	1	1	-
Pakistani	2	2	-
Thai	1	1	-
Taiwanese	40	35	5
Vietnamese	29	26	3
Generation status			
Third generation or higher, Self and both parents born in U.S.	30	29	1
Second generation, at least one parent not born in U.S.	172	158	14
'1.5' generation, not born in US, immigrated prior to age 10	99	91	8
First generation, not born in US, immigrated after age 10	38	32	6
Other	4	4	0

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